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THE

WORKS

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, MASS.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

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PART I.

GOD.

SERMON I.

SERMON I.

THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD PROVED FROM HIS WORKS.

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. — Heb. iii. 4.

It is not the intention of the apostle in these words to prove the existence of the Deity, but only to suggest the most easy and proper way of attaining the certain knowledge of this great and fundamental truth. His words, taken in this view, naturally introduce the object of the following discourse, which is to exhibit the evidence of the being and perfections of God. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, and the design proposed, it may be proper to proceed gradually, and observe,

I. This world might have had a beginning. There is nothing absurd in this supposition. We can easily conceive that there was a time when the heavens and earth did not exist; and consequently that there was a time when they first came into existence. The fashion of this world passes away, and mutability is stamped upon every object with which we are acquainted. The winds, and clouds, and seas, and the whole material system, are in continual motion. The varying seasons are constantly varying the face of the earth, and giving new forms and appearances to all the objects around us. One generation of mankind follows another; and whilst one is coming on, another is going off the stage of life. The numerous species of animals come and go, in a manner equally regular and rapid. The fruits of the earth spontaneously and successively spring up, come to maturity, flourish, fade and die. Such are the continual changes and revolutions which are brought about by

the laws of nature. And besides these, there are many others, which arise from human power and art. We find by experience that we have a transforming influence over all material objects, and are able to change their modes and forms at our pleasure. We can turn not only forests into fields, but mountains into plains. We can give form, and figure, and polish, not only to wood, and stone, and silver, and gold, but even to pearls and diamonds. No material object has ever been found, but what could be formed and fashioned by human power and skill. Now, if the world existed of necessity, it would be absolutely immutable, or incapable of change. Neither the laws of nature, nor the powers of man, could make the least impression upon it, nor produce the least motion or variation in it. Whatever necessarily exists, must necessarily exist the same. For that necessity which is the ground of its existence must be equally and perpetually the ground of all its modes and forms of existence. Since the world, therefore, does not necessarily exist in any certain mode or form, it might not have existed in any mode or form whatever. And if it might not have existed at all, then we can easily conceive that it might have had a beginning of existence, in some distant period of past duration.

II. If this world might have begun to exist, then it might have had a cause of its existence. Upon this principle the apostle supposes that "every house is builded by some man," or owes its existence to some cause. And this mode of reasoning from the effect to the cause, is perfectly agreeable to common sense. As soon as children begin to reason, they spontaneously reason from the effect to the cause; or from a thing's beginning to exist, to the cause of its existing. When they see any thing move, they imagine there is some cause of its moving. When they see any thing in motion stop, they conclude there is some cause of its stopping. When they see any thing broken, they naturally inquire, Who broke it? When they find any thing out of its usual or proper place, they are prone to ask, Who put it there? Indeed, whenever they observe any thing new or uncommon, they never fail to ascribe such a visible effect to some visible or invisible cause. Nor is this mode of reasoning peculiar to children; for all persons, of every age and capacity, always reason in the same manner, unless their minds have been previously perverted by habitual and long continued sophistry. Every man ascribes the motion of the winds, the flying of the clouds, the falling of rain and the growing of grass, to some known or unknown cause. Though men in the busy scenes of life spend very little time or thought in tracing particular effects to particular causes, yet they as clearly perceive that every particular effect may have a particular cause,

as the most learned and deep-thinking philosopher. It is extremely difficult for any man to help reasoning from the effect to the cause. Should the greatest skeptic travel two or three hundred miles into a wild wilderness, and there discover a very ancient and elegant house, he would instantaneously draw the conclusion in his own mind that that house was built by some man. In short, we intuitively perceive that whatever begins to exist, may have a cause of its existence. If the world, therefore, might have had a beginning, it is easy and natural to conceive that it might have had a cause.

III. If the world might have had a cause, then it must have had a cause. Some seem to scruple whether this can be fairly made out by strict and proper reasoning. Lord Kaimes and Mr. Hume deny that it implies any absurdity to suppose that a thing may begin to exist without a cause. And hence they conclude it is impossible to prove that every thing which begins to exist must have a cause. Mr. Hume says a cause is nothing more than an antecedent to a consequent, and an effect is nothing more than a consequent of an antecedent. But this representation of cause and effect is contrary to common sense. When a number of men walk in procession, they bear the relation of antecedent and consequent to each other, but not the relation of cause and effect. The motion of those who walk before is no cause of the motion of those who walk behind; or in other words, the antecedents do not bear the relation of cause to the consequents, nor the consequents bear the relation of effect to the antecedents. The idea of cause and effect always carries something more in it than the bare perception of antecedent and consequent. This we know from our own experience. The operation of our own minds gives us a clear and distinct perception of cause and effect. When we walk, we are conscious of a power to produce motion. The exercise of this power gives us the perception of cause, and the motion which flows from it gives us the perception not only of a consequent, but of an effect. Our idea of cause and effect is as clear and distinct as our idea of heat and cold, and is as truly correspondent to an original impression. This being established, the way is prepared to show, that if the world might have had a cause, it must have had a cause.

Whatever we can conceive to be capable of existing by a cause, we can as clearly conceive to be incapable of existing without a cause. For that which renders any thing capable of existing by a cause, renders it equally incapable of existing without a cause. Thus if the nature of a certain wheel render it capable of being moved by a cause, then that same nature renders it incapable of moving without a cause. Or if the

nature of a certain wheel render it capable of moving without a cause, then that same nature renders it incapable of being moved by a cause. Suppose there are two wheels, the one large and the other small. Suppose it is the nature of the large wheel to stand still of itself, but the nature of the small wheel to move of itself. Here it is easy to see that motion in one of these wheels may be owing to a cause, but not in the other. The large wheel, whose nature it is to stand still of itself, may be moved by a cause. For if a proper power be applied to it, motion will instantly follow; and if that power be withdrawn, motion will instantly cease. But the small wheel, whose nature it is to move of itself, cannot be moved by a cause. For if any power whatever be applied to it, the motion will be the same;* and consequently the power applied will produce no effect, and be no cause. If this reasoning be just, then whatever we can conceive to be capable of being an effect, must have been an effect; or whatever we can conceive to be capable of having a cause of its existence, must have had a cause of its existence. If we can only conceive, therefore, that the world in which we live, and the objects with which we are surrounded, are capable of having a cause of their existence, then we can as clearly conceive that it was absolutely impossible for them to have come into existence without a cause.

But Mr. Hume does not pretend to deny that the world is *capable* of having had a cause. And if this be true, then it is certain to a demonstration, that there *was* some cause which actually produced it. That is demonstrably false which cannot be conceived to be true; and that is demonstrably true which cannot be conceived to be false. It is demonstrably false that a body can move north and south at the same time; for it is not in the power of the mind to conceive that a body is moving north while it is moving south. It is demonstrably true that two and two are equal to four; for it is not in the power of the mind to conceive that two and two should be more or less than four. It is demonstrably true that all the parts are equal to the whole; for it is not in the power of the mind to conceive that all the parts should be more or less than the whole. And in the same manner it is demonstrably true that the world must have had a cause of its existence. We can clearly conceive that the world is capable of having had a cause of its existence, and therefore we cannot conceive that it was capable of coming into existence without a cause. The possibility of its having had a cause, destroys the possibility of its having come into existence without a cause; just as the possi-

* That is, if it moves as fast as possible, which is supposed.

bility of a body's moving one way at once, destroys the possibility of its moving two ways at once. Had Hume and Kaimes properly consulted the operation of their own minds upon this subject, we presume they never would have granted that it was possible for the world to have come into existence by a cause, and yet asserted that it was possible it might have come into existence without a cause. By granting the possibility of the world's coming into existence by a cause, they have virtually granted that it was absolutely impossible it should have come into existence without a cause. The bare possibility of the world's beginning to exist, amounts to a demonstration that it did begin to exist. And the bare possibility of its beginning to exist by a cause, amounts to a demonstration that there was some cause of its beginning to exist.

IV. The cause which produced this world must be equal to the effect produced. No cause can produce an effect superior to itself. This is no less impossible than that an effect should exist without a cause. For just so far as an effect surpasses the cause, it ceases to be an effect, and exists of itself. To suppose, therefore, that the world owes its existence to any cause inferior to itself, involves the same absurdity as to suppose that it began to exist without a cause. It requires a greater cause to produce a great, than a small effect. This we know by our own experience. We can produce small effects. We are able to move or new modify some things around us; but we cannot give existence to the smallest atom. To produce something out of nothing requires a far greater cause than it does merely to move or new modify things which already exist. Hence the character and perfections of the first and supreme Cause may be fairly argued from the things which he hath made.

Here, then, I would observe,

1. The Creator of all things must be possessed of *almighty power*. This is the first attribute of the first cause which his great and marvellous works impress upon the mind. In surveying the works of creation, their greatness constrains us to conclude that no less than almighty power could bring them out of nothing into being. It is true, our imagination is here apt to get the start of our reason, and we are ready to apprehend that the power of preserving is greater than the power of creating the world. Preserving power seems to admit of different degrees of effort, in proportion to the different degrees of magnitude in the objects preserved. It seems to require a greater effort in the Supreme Being to support a mountain than a mole-hill, or to support the ponderous earth than the light and flying clouds. But this is altogether owing to a delusive imag-

ination. In the eye of reason, whatever the Supreme Power can do, he can do with equal ease. It requires no more effort in the great First Cause to support and preserve the world, than it did to call it into existence at first. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." This facility of his operation displays the greatness of his power in the production of the world. He who produced an angel as easily as a man, a man as easily as a worm, and a world as easily as an atom, must be a being of unbounded power. His power of creating surpasses the powers of all dependent beings. For, were all their powers united, they could not create a fly, nor a worm, nor produce the least particle of matter. We cannot conceive of any power greater than that which can give existence, or produce something out of nothing. The being, therefore, who created this world, must be able to do every thing which lies within the limits of possibility. By creating one world, he has displayed a power sufficient to create as many worlds as space itself can contain. And therefore, if we may judge of the cause by the effect, we may safely conclude that the first and supreme Cause of all things is necessarily omnipotent.

2. The Author and Framer of the world must be supremely *wise* and *intelligent*. Mankind have always admired the beauty of the world. The Greeks, that learned and refined nation, called it beauty in the abstract. Uniformity amidst variety appears through every part of creation. The motions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies are uniform, though extremely various. There is uniformity amidst variety in every species of grain, of grass, of flowers, of trees and of animals. There is a great uniformity among the many millions of mankind, yet an almost infinite variety. The human body is a most curious piece of machinery. Its various parts are not only well proportioned, but nicely constructed, and situated to answer their various purposes. The feet are admirably fitted for walking, the hands for laboring, the eyes for seeing, the ears for hearing, and the mouth for both feeding and speaking. Indeed, not only the human frame, but the whole creation, appears to be made for use. All the luminaries of heaven serve many and important purposes. They not only afford light to the earth, but divide time into days, months and years, and a happy variety of seasons. Air and earth, fire and water, are all necessary to support and preserve the lives of men, of animals and vegetables. The seas which divide, at the same time unite the numerous nations of the earth. The lower species of animals appear to be made for the service of the higher; the higher and lower species appear to be made for the service of man; and man, a rational and noble creature, appears to be

made for the service of his Maker. Such variety, uniformity, regularity and intelligence in the effect, clearly demonstrate intelligence and wisdom in the cause. The world bears stronger marks of the design of the Creator, than a clock, or watch, or any other curious machine bears of the ingenuity of the artificer. Indeed it is easier to conceive that houses should be framed, that cities should be built, and all the arts and sciences carried to the highest pitch of improvement by mere chance, than that this beautiful, regular, and useful world should have been framed by any other cause than a wise and intelligent Being, who revolved and adjusted in his own mind every part of it, before he called it into existence. When we survey the order, usefulness and intelligence of the things that are made, we as clearly see and understand the manifold wisdom, as the eternal power, of the Godhead.

3. The builder and upholder of the world must be *every where present.* It is the nature of all created beings and objects to be constantly and absolutely dependent upon their Creator. But if he constantly upholds all his creatures and all his works, then he must be constantly present in every part of his wide creation. We cannot conceive that any cause can operate where it does not exist; and of course we cannot conceive that the Creator and Preserver of the world should exert his power beyond the limits of his presence. But it is certain that his preserving and governing power extends to every creature and every object, whether great or small, through every part of the created universe; and therefore it is equally certain that his presence constantly fills and surrounds the whole creation. And this gives us the highest possible idea of the immensity of the divine presence.

4. The maker and governor of the world must be a being of *boundless knowledge.* He must necessarily know himself, and be intuitively acquainted with all his natural and moral perfections. And by knowing these, he must necessarily know all possibles; that is, all things which lie within the limits of omnipotence. This is that knowledge which constitutes one of the essential attributes of the great first Cause. And besides this, he must necessarily have the knowledge of his own purposes and designs, which is properly termed fore-knowledge. For, by knowing his own decrees, he necessarily knows all actuals; that is, all things that ever will exist. Hence it appears that his understanding is infinite, and his knowledge boundless. His great and capacious mind comprehends at one view all things past, present and to come. And more than this cannot be known.

5. The first, supreme, and intelligent Cause of all things

must be *eternal.* To suppose the first Cause had a cause of his existence, is to suppose there was a cause before the first Cause. Or to suppose he was the cause of his own existence, is to suppose that he existed and operated before he did exist. Or to suppose that he came into existence without any cause, is to suppose what has been proved to be impossible. Hence we are constrained to suppose that there is something in his nature which renders his existence absolutely necessary and eternal. And though we cannot explain the necessity and eternity of the divine existence, yet this is no real objection against it, because it is reasonable to suppose the great Creator should exist in a manner which surpasses the comprehension of all his creatures.

6. The Framer of our bodies and the Father of our spirits must be a being of *moral rectitude.* He hath engraven the evidence of this upon the minds of all intelligent creatures. For, when he made them, "he bent them to the right;" or gave them a capacity of discerning the moral beauty or deformity of every moral agent. But can we suppose the Creator would furnish his creatures with a faculty by which they could discover his own moral character, unless he knew himself to be possessed of perfect rectitude and spotless purity? For, if he were not of such a character, his creatures whom he endued with moral powers would be capable of discovering it; and whenever they should discover it, they would be under moral obligation to hate and detest the author of their existence. Hence the moral faculty of man carries in it a clear demonstration of the moral rectitude of his Maker. Besides, the whole world bears innumerable marks of the divine goodness. It is every way adapted to satisfy the reasonable desires of all reasonable creatures. And the more the works of God have been explored by the most inquisitive and discerning minds, the more of his goodness as well as of his wisdom has been discovered. All the works of creation and providence have such a natural and direct tendency to promote the holiness and happiness of mankind, that, notwithstanding the prevalence of natural and moral evil, there is abundant reason to conclude that he who built all things is good. And it is well known that goodness is the sum and comprehension of all moral excellence.

Thus it appears, by the most natural and conclusive mode of reasoning, that there must be a first and supreme Cause of all things, who is possessed of every natural and moral perfection. It now remains to make a few deductions from the subject.

1. If it be true that the visible world displays the being and perfections of the Deity, then all who reason themselves into atheism are guilty of extreme folly. Those who assume the

name of atheists generally profess to be masters of superior knowledge and penetration, and affect to despise the rest of mankind as weak, ignorant, superstitious creatures. But if the world in which we live and all the objects which come to our view, bear clear and obvious marks of the supreme power, wisdom and goodness of their Author, then the imputation of folly and weakness must rebound upon those who, in defiance of reason and common sense, deny the being and perfections of the first and supreme Cause, who has impressed his own great and amiable character upon all his works. Professing themselves to be wise they become fools, and expose their folly to all men who make a proper use of their rational powers. It requires much learned labor in any of mankind to become atheists in speculation. They must stifle the plain dictates of reason and the common feelings of humanity by deep and subtile sophistry, before they can renounce the idea of the necessary connection between cause and effect, which is the last step in the road to atheism. But when they have taken this step, they have leaped over all the principles of fair reasoning, and put it out of their own power to prove the existence of any other intelligent being besides themselves. For, if it be once allowed that any thing can *begin* to exist and consequently *continue* to exist *without a cause*, then the actions of men are no evidence of their intellectual *powers*. And the atheist who makes this concession, has no principle left upon which he can justly conclude that there is any being in the universe except himself, who possesses the least degree of perception or intelligence. He, therefore, who says and believes that there is no God, must, in order to be consistent, say and believe that there are no men. But is it not extreme folly in any man to say and believe that all mankind are fools but himself? Such shame must be the promotion of learned and voluntary fools. It behooves those, therefore, who are leaning towards atheism, and laboring to reason themselves into the disbelief and denial of the Deity, to turn from their dangerous folly, and employ their noble powers to the better purpose of pursuing the chief end of man, which is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.

2. If there be a being of supreme power and intelligence, who is the Creator and Proprietor of the world, then there is great reason to think that he will dispose of all things to his own glory. The same motive which led him to create, will necessarily lead him to govern, all his creatures and all their actions. His own glory must have been his highest motive in creating the world, and therefore must be his supreme end in governing every creature and directing every event. When a man has built a neat and convenient house, we natu-

rally expect that he will convert it to his own use, or dispose of it according to his own pleasure. So we may reasonably expect that he who built all things will dispose of all things after the counsel of his own will. If there be a God, we may rely upon it that he will dispose of us and all our interests, for time and eternity, to his own glory.

3. If there be a being who hath made us, and who will absolutely dispose of us, then it is very desirable to receive a revelation of his will. We are very deeply interested in the purposes of his pleasure concerning us, and therefore have great reason to desire the knowledge of our present duty, and of our future and final destination. If we are to pass through different states of existence, and if one state is to be preparatory to another, then it is very desirable to be made acquainted with the various states through which we have to pass, and the various preparations which are necessary to fit us for a happy transition from one state to another, until we reach the last, in which we are to take up our everlasting residence. To live in God's world, and under his supreme disposal, without any intimations of his mind and will, must be extremely painful to creatures who are capable of looking forward, and anticipating their future and final condition. This has been found to be true, by the unhappy experience of those who have been deprived of the oracles of God. Socrates, one of the wisest and best of the heathens, felt and lamented the want of divine revelation; and at the same time expressed his hope that the kind Parent of all would, in some future period, indulge his reasonable creatures with such a desirable and important blessing. The bare light of nature discovers only the supremacy of the Creator, and the dependence of creatures. And this light leaves them in the most deplorable darkness. What person of common prudence would be willing to launch into the mighty ocean, without knowing whither the master of the ship designed to steer his course? But it would be of far less importance to the passenger in the ship to know the designs of the master, than it is to mankind to know the designs of their Creator. For the master of the ship could only transport the passenger to some remote part of this world, and there leave him for a time; but the great Creator can convey his rational creatures to a distant world, and there fix them for eternity. Every human creature, therefore, who feels the importance of his own existence, must desire some better information concerning his future and eternal state than he can possibly derive from the bare light of nature. This shows the stupidity and absurdity of those who deny the inspiration and authority of the sacred scriptures, merely because they cannot see any need of a divine revelation.

4. If there be a God who is possessed of every natural and moral perfection, then it is fruitless for those who believe and acknowledge his existence, to deny the divinity of the scriptures, in order to get rid of their disagreeable doctrines. No man would wish to disbelieve and discard the holy scriptures, if they contained nothing disagreeable to his heart. But many who read the sacred oracles, find they contain very disagreeable sentiments, which they wish to be at liberty to reject. And they are ready to imagine that if they can only bring themselves to disbelieve the divine authority of the scriptures, they shall then be at full liberty to disbelieve all the disagreeable doctrines which they teach and inculcate. But this is a very great mistake. For if they will only look into the book of nature, they will there find many of the same disagreeable truths which are written in the book of revelation. If the creation of the world be not a cunningly devised fable, but the production of an infinitely powerful, wise and benevolent being, then all who acknowledge his existence and attributes are still obliged to believe a number of sentiments which are no less disagreeable to the corrupt heart than any that can be found in the scriptures of truth. In particular,

They are obliged to believe the doctrine of divine decrees. If the Author of nature be a being of perfect wisdom, he must have formed all his purposes from eternity. He could not have begun to operate in a single instance, before he had determined the nature, number, duration and end of all his works. And by determining all his own conduct, he must have necessarily determined the conduct, and character, and final state, of all his intelligent and accountable creatures. The doctrine of decrees, in its largest extent, necessarily results from the being and perfections of God. Hence all who acknowledge themselves to be the creatures of God, are constrained to believe that he hath decreed every thing respecting them, through every period of their existence. Again,

If there be a God who governs all things in perfect rectitude, then it must be the duty of every intelligent creature to yield unconditional submission to his will. The will of the creature ought always to bow to the will of the Creator. Not one of the creatures of God has a right to say unto him, What doest thou? Unreserved submission is a duty which grows out of absolute dependence. And since all men without exception are entirely dependent upon God, they are under indispensable obligation to submit to him in all things, without the least murmur or complaint. If we acknowledge the existence of God, we must, in order to be consistent, cordially resign all our interests for time and eternity to his supreme disposal. Once more:

All who believe the existence and moral rectitude of the Deity, are obliged to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. A being who loves righteousness and hates iniquity cannot look upon the conduct of free, moral agents, with an eye of indifference. He must be either pleased or displeased with all their moral conduct. If they act agreeably to that moral faculty which he hath implanted in their breasts, they will meet with his approbation; but if they violate the dictates of conscience, and do those things which they know to be wrong, they will incur his just displeasure. The moral rectitude of the Supreme Being lays mankind under moral obligation to obey him, and at the same time gives them just ground to expect that he will finally call them to an account for all their actions, and treat them according to their respective characters, by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked.

These, and many other disagreeable truths, necessarily result from the essential perfections of the great Creator; and therefore it is of no avail to deny the truth and divinity of the scriptures, in order to get clear from the hard sayings and disagreeable doctrines of Christ and his apostles. No man, under the light of the gospel, can really believe the existence and love the character of God, and yet disbelieve and reject the doctrines of divine revelation.

5. If there be a God, then all his reasonable creatures are bound to be religious. The natural and moral attributes of the Deity are the primary ground of all religious duties and affections. And so long as God continues to possess supreme power, wisdom and goodness, these great and amiable attributes will lay all mankind under indispensable obligations to love, revere, obey and worship their Creator. Our capacity to know God obliges us to glorify him as God. And hence we must cease to be reasonable creatures, before we can cease to be under obligation to adore and worship him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. O come, then, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, and give unto him the glory which his great and amiable character deserves. Amen.

PART II.

DIVINE REVELATION.

SERMONS II. — VI.

SERMON II.

THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT IN RELIGION.

THESE were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.—ACTS, xvii. 11.

THE primitive preachers of the gospel considered their hearers as capable of judging of the truth of what they heard. They not only taught the truth, but exhibited clear and conclusive evidence to support what they taught. This appears to have been Paul's practice, from the two first verses of this chapter, in which it is said that Paul, as his manner was, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. But though he preached the gospel in this fair and candid manner, yet some were highly displeased and violently opposed him; which constrained him to leave Thessalonica and go to Berea, where he met with a kind and candid reception. The people there heard him with avidity and candor. Their minds were open to divine truth; and, so far as they understood it, they received it in love. And this fair, candid disposition led them not to place an implicit faith in the preacher, but to search the scriptures, the only infallible standard of truth, to see whether the doctrines he delivered were really contained in the word of God. And this was so far from displeasing the apostle, that he highly commended them for it, in the text. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." This conduct of the Bereans in exercising their right of private judgment in forming their religious sentiments, was agreeable to common sense, and sanctioned by divine

authority. We may therefore justly draw this general conclusion from it:

That men ought to exercise the right of private judgment in forming their religious sentiments.

I shall first show what it is to exercise the right of private judgment; and then show that men ought to exercise it in forming their religious sentiments.

I. Let us consider what it is to exercise the right of private judgment in forming our religious sentiments.

It is the right which every man has of seeing with his own eyes, hearing with his own ears, and of exercising his own reason, in forming his religious opinions. When any man, without any compulsion or restraint, freely exercises his own natural abilities in forming his sentiments, he exercises all the right of private judgment that he can have or enjoy. But this implies several things. In particular,

1. A right to hear what may be said upon the subject to be decided. Men are often unprepared to form their judgment upon a subject without collecting information from others. We have a right to hear what may be said upon a subject proposed to our approbation or belief, before we either receive or reject it. The Bereans had a right to hear the reasons the apostle had to offer in favor of Christianity, before they either received it as true, or rejected it as false. And this was proper, in order to form a just opinion of what he declared to be a revelation from heaven. We have a right to collect evidence upon any subject, from any who are able to give us information about it. And in many cases, before we have gained such information we are not duly prepared to form a decisive opinion. The more information men can collect from others in any case, the better they are prepared to judge correctly and form an opinion according to truth. Private judgment does not reject, but rightly improves all the light and information obtained from others.

2. This right implies a right to examine every subject for ourselves, and employ all our rational powers in investigating the truth. Though many things may have been said, and many volumes may have been written upon any religious doctrine, yet we have a right to think and reason upon it ourselves, and to search the scriptures, to see whether it be there revealed or not. After the Bereans had heard Paul preach and reason out of the scriptures, they had a right to reason and search the scriptures for themselves, and to gain more light, if they could, than the apostle had exhibited. The greatest and best of uninspired men are liable to err. And therefore we are to use our own reason and knowledge in connection with theirs, in form-

ing our religious opinions. When we come to think seriously and accurately upon a subject which others have treated with great confidence, we may find good reasons to differ from them in opinion. They may have overlooked, and we may have found the real truth in the case. The right of collecting evidence, and of weighing it when collected, is necessarily involved in the right of private judgment. Nor can we properly judge for ourselves, unless we examine for ourselves. After we have read and conversed upon a difficult religious subject, we ought to think and read the Bible, in order to unite with, or differ from others in opinion. This is the most essential and important branch of the right of private judgment. This is what others often wish to abridge us of, and what we are too apt to give up, or abuse. I may add,

3. The right of private judgment involves the right of forming our opinions according to the best light we can obtain. After a man knows what others have said or written, and after he has thought and searched the scriptures upon any religious subject, he has a right to form his own judgment exactly according to evidence. He has no right to exercise prejudice, or partiality; but he has a right to exercise impartiality, in spite of all the world. After all the evidence is collected from every quarter, then it is the proper business of the understanding, or judgment, to compare and balance evidence, and to form a decisive opinion or belief, according to apparent truth. We have no more right to judge without evidence, than we have to judge contrary to evidence; and we have no more right to doubt without, or contrary to evidence, than we have to believe without, or contrary to evidence. We have no right to keep ourselves in a state of doubt or uncertainty, when we have sufficient evidence to come to a decision. The command is, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The meaning is, examine all things; and after examination, decide what is right. Having briefly described the right of private judgment, I proceed,

II. To show that men ought to exercise it in forming their religious sentiments. And this will appear, if we consider,

1. That God has made men capable of judging for themselves in matters of religion. He has made them wiser than the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven; and his inspiration has given them understanding. He has given them not only the powers of perception, volition and memory, which are common to the lower species, but he has also endued them with the higher powers of reason and conscience, by which they are capable of judging what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. Men are moral agents. They are capable of acting in the view of moral motives. And this ena-

bles them to judge for themselves, in the great and serious concerns of religion, as well as in the common affairs of life. As they are capable of judging for themselves and forming their own religious sentiments, so it is their duty to do it. Their capacity creates their obligation, which they cannot dissolve so long as their capacity remains. As they are rational creatures, they are bound to act rationally. This, indeed, is the only power which they have no right ever to resign. They may, when necessary, give up their property, or civil liberty; but they may never give up their right of forming their own religious sentiments, and of serving God according to the dictates of their conscience. This is a right in its own nature inalienable; and since they cannot give it away, they cannot neglect to use it, without injuring both God and themselves. When the great and essential doctrines of the gospel are preached to them, they are obliged to judge of them according to the best evidence they are able to obtain, both from others, and from their own serious and impartial examination. They have no right to let their own depraved hearts, or the false reasonings of others, warp their understanding, and obscure the real evidence of divine truth which is to be seen in the Bible. But they are bound to exercise their own rational powers impartially, in searching the scriptures and other sources of information, in forming their religious sentiments, which may have a powerful influence upon their religious conduct and future state.

2. God has given men not only the proper powers, but the proper means of forming their own religious sentiments. The Bible, which he has put into their hands, contains sufficient information in regard to all the principal doctrines and duties of religion. God has revealed all the great truths which are necessary to be known and believed in order to salvation, with great plainness. The scriptures of truth are level to every one's capacity, so that way-faring men though fools cannot err therein, unless by prejudice, partiality, or blindness of heart. By seriously and attentively searching the scriptures, men of all ages, of all characters, of all professions, and of all capacities, may discover the truth respecting all sentiments or doctrines which are delivered to them by their teachers, or suggested and propagated by others. When the apostles went forth among Jews and Gentiles, they carried the scriptures with them, from which they professed to derive their sentiments, and to which they appealed for the truth of them. Just so it is now in the christian protestant world; all who claim the character of christian instructers, profess to preach the doctrines which are contained in that sacred volume, which is in every one's hands. They profess to reason out of the scriptures; and appeal to them for

the support of all the doctrines and duties which they inculcate. Those, therefore, who have the Bible in their hands, have ample means of information upon all religious subjects. They may, as the apostle directs, "try the spirits," or examine the doctrines which any religious teachers bring to them as divinely revealed truths. And since they have this ample source of information in their hands, they cannot, without great impropriety and danger, neglect to search the scriptures, and to employ their own noble, rational powers, in forming their own religious sentiments. Had they no such means as God has given, to come to the knowledge of the truth, they might almost despair of finding it, amidst the great variety and contrariety of religious opinions which are advanced and propagated in the world. But so long as they hold the Bible in their hands and in their own language, they have an infallible standard, by which they may try and determine the truth or falsehood of all the doctrines which are delivered by their teachers, or propagated by others. And this source of information renders them inexcusable, in neglecting to exercise their own private judgment in determining what is truth and what is error. Neither the confidence nor authority which any may display in propagating their sentiments, nor the specious reasons they may offer to support them, ought to lead men to neglect their own right to judge for themselves. They have the power and the means which God has given them, to know the truth; and these they are bound to improve for the great purposes for which they are given. It is not only their privilege, but their duty, to exercise their private judgment in matters of religion, and to believe and disbelieve according to real evidence.

3. This is the duty of every man, because God has appointed none to judge for him in respect to his religious opinions. It is true, God has appointed teachers, but not judges. The preachers of the gospel are to explain and inculcate the doctrines of it, and place them in as clear, plain and convincing a light as they can. But after all they have done to exhibit and support the truth, the hearers are to judge for themselves whether those things they have heard be the truth. They have the same sure word of inspiration to assist them in determining what is truth, that their teachers have; and they are obliged to consult it. Teachers, indeed, have often been disposed to assume the power and authority of dictating. And the christian church has suffered great injury, for ages, from the bigotry and usurpation of those who have sustained the office of sacred guides. But it was not so from the beginning. The apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel disclaimed all dominion over men's faith, and professed to be only helpers in promoting

their knowledge and holiness. And none who sustain the office of the ministry have any right to impose their own opinions upon their hearers by virtue of their sacred office. The Pope and all his hierarchy are usurpers, whose pretensions to supreme power and infallibility in the church are to be treated with disdain, as vile impositions. The people are their own proper judges of religious truth and error, and of ecclesiastical power. Christian churches have a right to form their own creeds and exercise their own discipline, independently of any superior ecclesiastical power on earth. As God has appointed none to judge and dictate for them in these serious concerns, so they are under indispensable obligations to exercise their own private judgment.

4. God has forbidden men to take their religious sentiments from others upon trust. His direction to his ancient people was to appeal to the law, and not to the teachers of it, in order to distinguish truth from error. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." And Christ forbade his followers to call any man Father. He charged his disciples to "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." We are commanded to prove, that is, examine all things; and to hold fast that which is good; and to buy the truth and sell it not. The apostle charges christians not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. John tells believers, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine," meaning the true gospel, "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." And Paul tells the Galatians to reject any false doctrines, though brought to them by men or angels. Such divine prohibitions against receiving false teachers and false doctrines necessarily imply that it is the duty of every man to judge for himself in matters of religion, and to adopt no religious sentiment without examination and satisfactory evidence of its being a real truth. God knows that the preachers of the gospel, as well as others, are liable to err in their religious opinions; and therefore forbids their hearers to place an implicit faith in what they deliver as divine truth. And since God has forbidden them to place an implicit faith in the opinions of those whom he has appointed to instruct them, he lays them under an imperious necessity to judge for themselves in forming their religious sentiments. Besides,

5. Every man must feel the effects of his own religious opinions, and consequently ought to exercise his own judgment in forming them. This is a matter of too much consequence to put out of his own hands. Religion itself depends upon just views of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel. Religious affec-

tions must be exercised in the view of religious objects; and the nature of religious affections is always similar to the objects upon which they terminate. If men have false opinions of God, of Christ and of themselves, their religious affections, if they have any, will be correspondent to their false sentiments. Men's religious exercises of heart are always agreeable to their views of the nature and character of the Supreme Being, whom they love and adore. Hence says the prophet Micah, "All people will walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever." The religious sentiments of the heathen govern their religious affections. The religious sentiments of the Mohammedans govern their religious affections. The religious sentiments of the Jews govern their religious affections. The religious sentiments of deists, govern their religious affections. The religious sentiments of those who call themselves Christians, govern their religious affections. And the religious sentiments of each sect or denomination of Christians, govern their religious affections. True religious sentiments, therefore, are essential to true religion. Men cannot have true religion, without having the true knowledge of God and of the essential doctrines of the gospel. Accordingly, every man's religion will be affected by the religious sentiments which he cordially embraces. It is therefore of as much importance to form our own religious sentiments, and to form them according to truth, as to have true religion; and it is of as much importance to have true religion, as it is to secure the salvation of our souls. If we suffer others to form our religious sentiments for us, yet God will not suffer us to escape the effects of our folly and guilt. We must feel the effects of our own principles, as well as of our own practice. We must give an account of our faith, as well as of our conduct. Not only our temporal, but our eternal interests are concerned in forming our religious sentiments. Let us remember that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, who has told us, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be the duty of men to exercise their private judgment in the manner that has been mentioned, then they may always know what they ought to believe and practice. If they collect all the evidence in their power, and judge according to it, they will certainly know what it is they ought to believe and to do. If they exercise their right in seeking for evidence, and exercise their right in judging according to it, they will form a judg-

ment which they have a right to follow; and which neither God nor their own conscience will condemn. The Bereans could know their duty with respect to believing the doctrines which Paul preached. They could hear him attentively and impartially; and after they had heard him they could search the scriptures attentively and impartially; and after they had done these things, they could form their judgment according to the evidence they had discovered, which was the best evidence they could obtain. And to judge according to the best evidence they could get, was doing their duty in the case, both in the sight of God, and in the sight of their own conscience. This is a proper mode of judging what it is right to believe, and equally a proper mode of judging what it is right to do. We are all very apt to complain that we know not what to believe, nor what to do; but our complaint is always groundless. God never places mankind in a situation in which they cannot know and do their duty. If it were possible to place them in such a situation, they would not for the time be moral agents, nor proper subjects of moral government. But we have not been, nor can we be placed in such a situation. It never was true, when we complained that we could not know our duty, that we could not know it. There never was any insurmountable difficulty in knowing our duty but what arose from our unwillingness to know it. Our unwillingness to know it, might have arisen from our unwillingness to seek for information; or our unwillingness to seek to those for information who we knew were able to inform us; or our unwillingness to examine the subject of doubt; or our unwillingness to do our duty, though we knew it. All that God requires of us is, to search for the best evidence as to what our duty is, and then to act according to that evidence. Though God does not require a heathen to search the scriptures to know his duty, yet he is morally obliged to consult his reason and conscience to learn his duty, and to act agreeably to the dictates of these intellectual powers, which he knows he ought to obey. There is no man in this world, who is in his right mind, that cannot know what he ought to believe, and what he ought to do, in any given instance. It is absurd for christians, who have the Bible in their hands, to plead in excuse for believing and doing wrong, that they could not know what to believe, or what to do; for they always may have evidence which makes it their duty to believe or not to believe, and to act or not to act.

2. If men ought to exercise their right of private judgment in the manner which has been mentioned, then they may not only know that they have acted right in forming their religious sentiments, but know that they have formed them according to

truth. Many imagine, because men may err in forming their religious sentiments, that they never can know whether they have formed them right in any case whatever. But they have no right to draw this consequence from human fallibility; for though men may judge wrong in some cases, yet they may judge right in some cases. When they judge wrong, they cannot know that they judge right; but when they do judge right, they may know that they judge right. Though they may sometimes think that they judge right when they judge wrong; yet when they do judge right, they may not only think that they judge right, but know that they judge right. It is easy to see why they so often think that they judge right when they judge wrong, in forming their religious sentiments. They may judge under the undue influence of tradition, or education, or the opinion of others, which directly tends to lead them insensibly into error. But if they would exercise their own private judgment in forming their religious sentiments, they would generally judge right; and of course might know that they had judged right. Men are naturally unwilling to take the trouble of examining religious subjects, and of using the proper means of discovering the truth, by properly exercising their right of private judgment. Not one in ten among the learned, and not one in fifty among the unlearned, properly exercise their private judgment in forming their religious sentiments. People are taught at this day that it is in vain for them to exercise their right of private judgment in matters of religion. One celebrated divine * asserts in a sermon he has published, that no christian can certainly know that the gospel itself is of divine inspiration; and another ingenious divine † has stated that he himself does not certainly know that any one of his religious sentiments is certainly true. But is not this a false, groundless and dangerous opinion? and did it not spring from the neglect of exercising private judgment? The Bereans acted a wiser part. They exercised their private judgment, and examined and determined for themselves whether the doctrines they heard Paul preach were really true. They judged right, and no doubt they knew that they judged right. Paul first formed a wrong opinion of Christ, and verily thought it was a true opinion; but after he had formed another and true opinion of Christ, he knew that his present opinion was right, and his former opinion was wrong. The right of private judgment in matters of religion would be of no service, if, by the proper exercise of it, we could not discover the real truth respecting religious subjects, and know that we discover it.

* President Dwight. † Noah Worcester.

3. If the right of private judgment in matters of religion be such as has been described, then it may be greatly abused. Under the pretext of this right, men may take the liberty of judging very erroneously, unreasonably and wickedly. This liberty of judging of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica, the Jews grossly abused. After he had reasoned with them three Sabbath days out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that he was the real Christ, they maliciously rose in a body, and by violence drove him out of the city, charging him with the guilt of breaking the peace and rebelling against Cæsar, by preaching the spiritual kingdom and authority of Christ. Thus the Jews, under the influence of tradition, education and prejudice, disbelieved and rejected the pure doctrines of the gospel which Paul preached, while at the very same time a multitude of the Greeks candidly believed and cordially embraced them. This is far from being a solitary instance of men's abusing their right of private judgment in forming their religious sentiments. Wherever the gospel has been preached since the apostles, it has been opposed, rejected, or perverted by the great majority of the hearers, under the pretext of the right of private judgment, unless this right has been restrained by civil or ecclesiastical tyranny. This right we know is generally enjoyed in Europe, and universally enjoyed in this land of freedom. But what have been, and what are now the fruits and effects of men's enjoying the liberty of forming their own religious sentiments? Have not the great majority abused this liberty, by becoming skeptics, or deists, or universalists, or embracing error under some name or other? But though the right of private judgment has been, and still is so extensively and grossly abused, it is far better to tolerate it, than to restrain it by any other means than those which are rational and spiritual. Christ's kingdom is not of this world; and all his cordial subjects ought always to act on the pure principles of truth and benevolence.

4. If the right of private judgment be such as has been described, then we may easily see how those who judge for themselves on religious subjects, and with the same degree of light before them, may judge very differently. Different causes may operate differently on different men, to restrain them from weighing the arguments for or against any religious truth in an even balance. One may pay more attention to the arguments on one side of the question, and another may pay more attention to the arguments on the opposite side of the question; or one may seek for arguments on one side of the question, and another may seek for arguments on the opposite side of the

question; or one may wish to find the truth in the case, and another, for some sinister motive, may wish not to find it. These men, therefore, will form different opinions on the subject examined. Such cases as this very frequently occur in religious disputes. Men of equal abilities and apparent candor very seldom convince one another in a religious dispute; though they may convince others of what is truth and what is error. It is not strange, therefore, that so few religious disputes are finally settled by those who are engaged in them. But still these religious disputes tend to exhibit truth and to expose error, and give an opportunity to all the impartial to form their religious opinions according to truth.

5. If the right of private judgment be such as has been described, then it is consistent with all those things which have been thought and said to militate against it.

This right is consistent with the duty of parents to give religious instruction to their children. It is said by many that children ought not to be instructed in religious duties and doctrines till they come to maturity in their rational powers, and are able to judge for themselves whether the Bible is the word of God, and its doctrines and duties are true. This doctrine was taught in France by Voltaire and Helvetius, and had a pernicious influence on the rising generations for a time. The same doctrine has been maintained and propagated in this country, and actually led parents and schoolmasters to lay aside the Assembly's Catechism and every religious book, the Bible not excepted; and even the very form of religion. But God, who knows the capacity of children, commands their parents to teach them the duties and doctrines of Christianity, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children are not required to exercise their private judgment until they are capable of it; but as soon as they are capable, whether at four years old, or at seven, or at ten, they are required to exercise it, and judge whether their parents or other instructers teach them the truth. The duties of parents and of children are perfectly consistent with the right of private judgment in things of religion.

The right of private judgment is consistent with the duty of preachers. They are to declare the whole counsel of God, and exhibit every doctrine and duty revealed in the Bible as plainly and intelligibly as possible. But their hearers, like the noble Bereans, are to exercise their private judgment, and form their own opinion whether their religious teachers exhibit truth or error. Preachers have no dominion over the faith of their hearers. Paul disclaimed all such authority, and commended his hearers for judging for themselves.

The right of private judgment is consistent with the divine command to believe and embrace the gospel immediately, or without the least delay. Christ did command his apostles and their successors to go and preach the gospel every where, and call upon sinners to repent and believe it immediately. The author of "Christianity not founded on Argument," presumes to argue from this injunction that Christianity is not founded in reason; for if it were founded in reason, men might and ought to reason upon it and judge for themselves, whether it be true or false religion. Dr. Doddridge calls this author one of the most subtile enemies of Christianity. His argument is both false and sophistical. The apostles and all their faithful successors have preached the gospel argumentatively. They did not call upon men to embrace the gospel without any reason. They reasoned out of the scriptures that Christ was the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. And after his resurrection, they stated public, notorious facts, to prove that he had suffered and died the just for the unjust. And then they called upon men to believe and trust in him for salvation upon plain and infallible evidence, which was sufficient to convince every hearer whose mind was not barred by the depravity of his heart. The apostles required men to believe upon the evidence they exhibited, and not to believe without evidence, and without judging for themselves, whether the gospel were true or false.

The right of private judgment is consistent with the duty of christians to be entirely united in their religious sentiments. Paul enjoins this duty upon them. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The proper exercise of private judgment is so far from being a bar to the entire union of christians in their religious sentiments, that it is the only thing that can bring them to think, to speak, to judge alike, and to be perfectly joined together in the belief of the same essential doctrines of the gospel. The proper exercise of private judgment is like a magnet to draw them together in their religious sentiments, without the least condescension to each other.

The proper exercise of private judgment is consistent with the duty of those who are sound in the faith to censure and reject such heretics as run into gross and fundamental errors, that are subversive of the gospel. Those who properly exercise their private judgment know how to distinguish fundamental errors from fundamental truth, in the professors of religion, and therefore can consistently perform the trying duty of censuring and excluding from their communion such as make shipwreck

of their faith. Those who abuse their right of private judgment, have no reason to complain of others for censuring them for the abuse of it.

I may still farther observe, under this head, that it is consistent for God to condemn those who abuse their right of private judgment. He does condemn those who are under strong delusions to believe a lie. They never would have run into such fatal errors, if they had properly exercised their right of private judgment. Though God allowed them to judge for themselves, yet he never gave them a right to judge wrong. All the doctrines and duties which God has revealed, and all the precepts and prohibitions he has given in his word, are entirely consistent with the right and duty of private judgment. And no man who really understands the nature of this right and duty, can raise a solid, or even a plausible objection against it.

6. It appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that none who believe the right of private judgment in matters of religion can believe the too common and prevailing notion of universal catholicism. This notion is altogether unscriptural and unreasonable. It is built upon three false principles. One is, that the doctrines and duties of Christianity are not consistent with each other. A second principle is, that if they are consistent, no man is able to see their consistency. And a third principle is, that it is not necessary that any man should see their truth and consistency, in order to embrace the gospel and be saved. Every one of these principles is false. It is false that the doctrines and duties of Christianity are not consistent; for they are perfectly consistent. It is false that no man can see their consistency; for every man can, if he would properly exercise his judgment and conscience, see their consistency. And it is false that it is not necessary that any man should see their truth and consistency in order to embrace the gospel and be saved; for it is only through sanctification and the belief of the truth that men can be saved. As all these principles are false, so the notion of universal catholicism, which is founded upon them, must be equally false. Nor is it merely false, but extremely dangerous. It naturally tends to lead men into deism and downright skepticism. For if men cannot know that the dictates of their own reason and conscience are true, they cannot know that the Bible is true, or that any of its doctrines and duties are true. They must be infidels. The notion of universal catholicism is a false and dangerous opinion, greatly prevailing at the present day, and producing the most fatal effects.

Finally, this subject calls upon three classes of men to do their duty immediately.

First, it calls upon errorists, who have embraced error instead of truth, to show themselves men, and embrace truth instead of error. If they would only exercise their right of private judgment as they ought to do, it would effectually cure them of their errors.

Secondly, this subject calls upon those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, to renounce their enmity and opposition to the great and important doctrines which they know to be true, and cordially embrace the gospel. Let not this be their condemnation, that light has come into the world and into their minds, but they still love darkness rather than light.

Lastly, this subject calls upon those who know and love the truth, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and employ every proper method to preserve and promote it. Let them attend more than is the practice at the present day, to the first principles of the oracles of God. This is a duty which christians are in great danger of neglecting, while so many are lying in wait to deceive the unwary and unguarded.

ESSAY III.

MIRACLES.

All must acknowledge, who have read the sacred volume, that it comes to us under a divine signature, and claims to be the word of God. This claim is not founded upon the bare declaration of the sacred writers; but upon the miracles which were wrought to prove their divine mission. To give this argument in favor of revealed religion its proper force, we shall, first, fix and determine the nature of miracles; then point out the professed purpose for which they were wrought; and, in the last place, make it appear that they sufficiently answer the end proposed.

I. We are to explain the nature of miracles. These have been very differently defined by different authors. But without spending time to examine their definitions, it may be sufficient to say, that *a miracle is an effect, wrought by God himself, out of the common course of nature.*

Though in a loose sense, men may be said to work miracles, yet in a strict and proper sense, they are the immediate production of the Deity. In this light they are uniformly represented in scripture. The miracles of our Saviour are expressly ascribed to God. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." It is plainly said, that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." And it is no less plainly said, that God wrought miracles in favor of the other apostles. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bear-

ing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles." Agreeably to these representations, those who are said to work miracles disclaim their *own*, and acknowledge the *divine* agency in their production. Christ, speaking of his own miracles, expressly declares, "The Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Peter and John disclaim the honor of curing the impotent man, and ascribe it to him, to whom alone it was justly due. "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus.—And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." The ancient prophets also disclaimed the power of working miracles, and in the same manner ascribed it to God. When Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream, to interpret it; Joseph replied, "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." And when Nebuchadnezzar said unto Daniel, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, There is a *God in heaven* that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days:—But *as for me*, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living."

The manner in which miracles were produced farther shows that they were wrought by the finger of God. There was no natural connection between the miracles of Moses and his own exertions. His throwing down his rod, had no natural tendency to turn it into a serpent; and his taking it up, had no natural tendency to turn it into a rod again. There was no natural connection between the sound of rams' horns, and the falling of the walls of Jericho. And Elisha's casting a stick into the water, was no natural efficient cause of the young prophet's axe rising and swimming upon the surface. In all these instances, the miracles were immediately owing to a divine agency. And the manner in which Christ and the apostles wrought miracles, equally discovers the immediate hand of God. Our Saviour did but say to the sea, Be still; and it was still. He did but say to the leper, Be thou clean; and immediately the leprosy departed from him. He did but say to the young man, whom they were carrying to the grave, I say unto thee, Arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. He did but say to Lazarus, Come forth; and he that was dead came forth, bound

hand and foot with grave clothes. Our Lord told his apostles that they might work miracles in the same manner, and if they only said, in faith, to this or that mountain, Be thou removed and cast into the sea, the miraculous effect should instantly follow. Now this manner of working miracles by speaking a word, is a clear evidence that they were wrought by him who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" that is, by God himself. The prophets and apostles were only the occasion, and not the efficient cause, of the miracles which are ascribed to them. No natural, nor even delegated power of their own, had the least influence in producing a miraculous effect. This was wholly owing to the immediate power and agency of the Deity, who, strictly speaking, in every instance, wrought the miracle.

It is now time to consider the last branch of our definition, which is, that a miracle must be wrought not only by God himself, but out of the common course of nature. God has been pleased to prescribe a rule of conduct to himself, according to which he commonly operates in governing the affairs of the world. And so long as he acts agreeably to this rule, no effects which he produces, however great or wonderful, can be properly called miracles. But whenever he departs from the common course of nature, and produces any effect, that effect is really a miracle. Accordingly we find that all the miracles which are recorded in scripture were apparently wrought out of the common course of nature. It was out of God's usual course of conduct to cause the Red Sea to divide, roll back, and stand still, while his people passed over on dry ground. It was out of God's usual course of conduct to preserve Daniel in the lion's den, and the three worthies in the burning fiery furnace. And it was contrary to every known law of nature for Christ to cure the lame, heal the sick, and raise the dead, by speaking a word. Thus, according to scripture, a miracle is an effect wrought by God himself out of the common course of nature.

But against this definition it may be objected, in the first place, that we are not fully acquainted with the laws of nature, and therefore we cannot absolutely determine when God does or does not act agreeably to them.

It is true, indeed, we cannot comprehend the utmost bounds of nature, and of consequence cannot determine in all cases whether the laws of nature are superseded or not. But it would be very absurd to infer from this that there are no plain cases in which we can easily and clearly determine that the laws of nature are suspended or counteracted. We often meet with doubtful cases in seeing, hearing and reasoning; but we never infer from these that there are no plain cases, in which we

know that we see and hear and reason according to truth. Supposing we cannot determine whether there was any thing contrary to nature in the cures which were wrought in the pool of Bethesda; yet this does not prove that we cannot determine that there was something contrary to nature in God's dividing the Red Sea, and in Christ's raising the dead to life. Though we cannot fix the precise boundaries of nature, yet we can determine, in plain cases, when it is really counteracted. We know, for instance, that it is the nature of fire to consume human bodies; and therefore we know that nature was counteracted in the preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the burning fiery furnace. Hence our definition of a miracle is just and accurate; though there may be doubtful cases, in which it may be difficult to draw the line exactly between natural and supernatural effects.

But still some may say, Did not the magicians work miracles? Did not God suppose that a prophet or dreamer of dreams might arise among his people, and give a sign or a wonder? Did not Christ foretel the coming of false prophets, who should show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, were it possible, the very elect? And did not John represent the Beast which he foretold, as making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men, and deceiving the inhabitants of the earth by the miracles which he performed? These representations seem to refute the notion that none but God can work miracles.

A very few observations are sufficient to remove this plausible objection.

1. It must be allowed that there is a difference between true miracles, and all those things which only resemble them. Let any definition be given of a miracle, and it must be true that there is a difference between a miracle and any thing which only carries the appearance of it. So that all must allow that there is a difference between true and false miracles; or in other words, between real miracles and all those things which only resemble them. This distinction is made in the Bible. Ezekiel declares, concerning the false prophets, "They have seen vanity and lying divination." And he thus appeals to them for the truth of his declaration: "Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination?" Paul likewise represents the Man of sin as having power to perform signs and lying wonders; that is, false miracles. According to scripture as well as reason, there must be a difference between true miracles and false. But,

2. There can be no other distinction between true and false miracles, than this: True miracles are wrought by God, and

false miracles are wrought by creatures. For God to do only that which any creature can do, is no miracle; because, by doing what creatures are able to do, he does not discover his own power or interposition. And to suppose that creatures can perform miracles, is to suppose that there is no real perceptible difference between a miracle and a common action. For upon this supposition, a miracle, as well as a common action, is performed by that power which is natural to creatures. And one exertion of mere natural power is no more a miracle than another. Hence, there is nothing that men can do by their natural power, which deserves the name of a miracle. And for the same reason, nothing can be called a miracle which Satan is able to do by his natural power. So that no creatures whatever can work miracles. But if no creatures can work miracles, then miracles must be such effects as are wrought by the immediate power and agency of God, out of the usual course of his operation. Accordingly we find that the scripture distinguishes true miracles from false, by ascribing true miracles to God, and false miracles, or lying wonders, to created agents. The miracles of Moses are ascribed to God; but the miracles of the magicians to their enchantments. And the magicians themselves made the same distinction. When lice were produced, they said unto Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." Paul ascribes the false miracles of the Man of sin to the agency of Satan. "And then shall that wicked be revealed — whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and *lying wonders*." And the apostle John ascribes these same signs and lying wonders to the operation of the devil. "And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils working miracles." Now if there be a distinction between true miracles and false; and if all miracles and signs which are wrought by wicked men or devils are false miracles, or lying wonders; then it necessarily follows that all true miracles are the immediate production of the Deity, or effects wrought by God himself, out of the common course of nature. The way is now prepared,

II. To point out the professed purpose for which miracles were wrought. We must suppose that God had some important purpose to answer, by stepping out of the usual course of his operation, and suspending the laws of nature. And if we look into the Bible, we shall find that the great design which God expressly proposed in working miracles was, *to attest the divine mission* of those whom he authorized to bear his messages to mankind. Here we may observe,

1. This purpose was expressly proposed at the time when miracles were wrought. God promised Moses and Aaron that he would attest their divine mission to Pharaoh, whenever he should call for their credentials. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." And when God came down upon mount Sinai, with majesty and great glory, it was to give a clear and striking testimony to the divine mission of Moses. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever." After Elijah had publicly professed to be a true prophet, he prayed to God to confirm his profession by a special miracle. "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word." God heard this his request, and attested his divine mission, before all the people, by miraculously consuming the sacrifice prepared. The miracles of Christ are expressly said to be attestations of his divine authority. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." When Peter went to Cornelius, he again asserted that God had borne public testimony to the divine mission of Christ by miracles. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began, in Galilee, after the baptism, which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." And as God attested the divine mission of Christ by miracles, so Christ gave the same kind of attestation to the divine mission of the apostles. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.—So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." With this agrees the account given of Paul and Barnabas, while they continued at Iconium. "Long time, therefore, abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, who

gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Hence it appears that the professed purpose for which miracles were wrought, under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, was to attest the divine mission of those whom God authorized to reveal his will to the children of men. And this leads us to observe,

2. That the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, appealed to miracles, as the highest credentials of their divine mission. We have already seen that Moses and Elijah appealed to miracles, to prove that they were sent of God, to reveal his will and plead his cause. Our Saviour likewise appealed to his miracles, as the highest credentials of his mediatorial character and conduct. When John sent two of his disciples to Jesus, to inquire whether he was the promised Messiah, instead of saying in so many words, that he was the Christ, he referred them to his miracles, as the highest proof of it. "And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? — Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." When the scribes questioned his authority to forgive sins, he wrought a miracle to prove it. "And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier? to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But *that ye may know* that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed unto his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men." When the Jews accused him of blasphemy, for claiming to be the Son of God, he appealed to his miracles to prove the propriety of his claim. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, *believe the works.*" And to confirm the same truth, he said again to the Jews: "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." Upon the occasion of his curing the impotent man on the Sabbath, he once more vindicated his divine authority and mission, by appealing first to the testimony of John, and then to the testimony of his miracles. "But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works that the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Peter and John appealed to a miracle wrought in their favor, to confirm the divine authority by which they

preached the gospel, and acted in the name of Christ. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." When this stopped the mouths of their adversaries, who durst only threaten them, they took courage, and prayed that the testimony of miracles might still attend their preaching. "Now, Lord, behold their threatenings: And grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." Paul, the last of the apostles, appealed once and again to his miracles, as the infallible evidence of his apostleship, which was frequently called in question. To the Romans he says, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." And to convince the Corinthians of the reality of his divine mission, he was obliged to appeal to his miracles, the proper and acknowledged signs of an apostle. "I am become a fool in glorying: Ye have compelled me: For I ought to have been commended of you; For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."

It is now sufficiently evident, we trust, that miracles were wrought for the professed purpose of proving the divine mission of those whom God sent to reveal his will to the children of men. This appears from the plain declarations of scripture, and from the conduct of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles, who constantly appealed to miracles as the highest credentials of their divine mission and authority to speak and act in the name of the living and true God. It only remains to make it appear,

III. That miracles answer the end for which they were designed.

What we mean by this proposition is, that miracles carry such evidence of the truth and divinity of the scriptures, as ought to convince us that they are the word of God. It is true, the evidence of miracles, as well as any other external evidence of the inspiration of the scriptures, may be disregarded, and of

consequence disbelieved. It is not pretended, therefore, that miracles give irresistible evidence of revealed religion; but only such evidence as is sufficient to convince every one who examines it with attention and candor. But before we proceed to illustrate this point, it seems necessary to meet the enemies of divine revelation in the threshold, and to premise that the miracles which are recorded in scripture are as credible, or worthy to be believed, as any other facts, which are related in the Bible, or in any other ancient history. They were addressed to men's eyes, and ears, and understandings. They were performed in the face of day, in the most public places, and in the most public manner. And they were of such an uncommon and extraordinary nature, as to excite the curiosity and attention of both friends and foes. These circumstances put it into the power of the spectators to examine their reality. The miracles of Moses were exhibited before the king, and court, and wise men of Egypt; which gave them the fairest opportunity of satisfying themselves whether they were realities, or mere delusions. The miracle of Elijah was wrought before the prophets, and priests, and people of Israel, who, with one consent and with a loud voice, proclaimed their belief of the fact. The miracles which were wrought in favor of Daniel and the three worthies were exhibited in the most public manner, and before vast multitudes of spectators. Our Saviour's miracles were performed on public and solemn occasions, and in the presence of friends and enemies. He raised Lazarus and the widow's son from the dead, before large collections of people. And Peter cured the impotent man at the gate of the temple, in the midst of the rulers and people of Israel. And in all these instances, the beholders were constrained to acknowledge the reality of the miracles. Besides, there was another circumstance which greatly increased the credibility of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible. They were never wrought on slight or trivial occasions, but only when some end, worthy of the Deity, required his immediate interposition and exertion. By leaving out this single circumstance, a late writer has endeavored to destroy the importance, and consequently the credibility of miracles. He has this shrewd remark: "Suppose I were to say, that when I sat down to write this book, a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen and wrote every word that is herein written; would any body believe me? Certainly they would not." It is granted they would not believe him; and for this plain reason — the occasion did not require the interposition of the Deity. But this cannot be said in respect to the miracles which are recorded in scripture. They were wrought on important occasions, which required the interposition of the immediate hand of

Heaven. It was highly becoming the Supreme Being to attest the divine mission of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles, whom he sent to accomplish the most interesting and important designs. This consideration gives a credibility to scripture miracles, which cannot be found in the strange and wonderful things related by profane authors. And notwithstanding some weak and superficial writers in favor of infidelity have called in question the existence of the miracles which are recorded in the Bible; yet Josephus, Celsus, and Julian, the most learned and bitter enemies of the christian religion, have frankly acknowledged their truth and reality. We may rely upon it, therefore, that the miracles which are related in scripture did actually exist. This being premised, we proceed to observe,

1. The miracles of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles, carried as much evidence of their divine mission as mankind ever required. Pharaoh required no higher evidence that Moses came from God, than his working miracles. It seems to have been a given point with the people of Israel, that if Elijah wrought a real miracle, he was the true prophet of the Lord. And the Jews in general expected the Messiah, when he came, would exhibit no higher evidence of his divine mission, than that of miracles. This they acknowledged on a certain occasion, by saying, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" Besides, his enemies frequently desired and required him to produce the testimony of miracles, in favor of his divine mission and authority. Once they said, "What sign showest thou, that we may see and believe thee?" Once they said, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." And they repeatedly desired him, "that he would show them a sign from heaven." Men had a right to expect and require this evidence of the divine mission of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles; and when they exhibited this evidence in their favor, every person ought to have been entirely satisfied with it. It is, therefore, the dictate of common sense, that those divine teachers gave clear and sufficient evidence of their divine mission, by the miracles which they wrought.

2. Their miracles actually convinced many, of their divine mission. The Jewish nation in general were convinced "that God spake unto Moses." Many individuals believed that Christ was sent of God. His first miracle "manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." While he attended the passover at Jerusalem, "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." His miracles convinced Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, of his divine mission.

"Rabbi," says he, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." His giving sight to the man born blind raised a dispute about the evidence of miracles, and finally discovered the conviction which that miracle carried to the minds of the candid. "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, *He is a prophet.* Then said they unto him, Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear; Wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing." Christ raised Lazarus from the grave, after he had been dead four days, with a view to make men believe his divine mission, and he actually accomplished his purpose. The account is this: "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always: But because of the people which stand by, I said it, *that they may believe that thou hast sent me.* And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." The miracles of the apostles carried equal conviction to the specta-

tors, who were equally prejudiced against them. The Jewish council, who arraigned Peter and John before them for healing the man lame from his mother's womb, were fully convinced of their divine mission, by the evidence of that miracle. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." There is another instance of the convincing evidence of miracles which is related in the eighth of Acts. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.—Then Simon himself believed also; And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." It appears from these facts, that the miracles of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, did actually convince both friends and foes, that they were teachers come from God.

3. Their miracles carried such evidence of their divine authority, as none of their powerful and subtile enemies could gainsay or destroy. Men of corrupt minds used all their power and art to destroy their credentials; but they were unable to accomplish their malignant purpose. The magicians, at first, confronted the miracles of Moses with their enchantments; but they were finally constrained to acknowledge the finger of God in favor of the prophet. The prophets of Baal attempted to destroy the authority of Elijah; but the miracle which they labored in vain to produce, and which he actually wrought, completely destroyed their credit, and established his own. The miracles of Christ put to silence both men and devils. And though some presumed to imitate the miracles of the apostles, yet they met with that shame, reproach and disappointment, which they justly deserved. Let us read the account. "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of

one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Thus effectually did miracles answer the purpose for which they were wrought. They triumphed over all opposition, exposed the delusions of Satan, and constrained even diviners and sorcerers to believe the truth and divinity of the gospel.

4. Miracles pledge the divine veracity, and therefore infallibly prove the divine mission of those in whose favor they are wrought. We have shown that they are produced by the finger of God, and for the professed purpose of confirming the divine mission of those whom he authorizes to reveal his will. Hence miracles have the nature of a testimony, and do actually pledge the divine veracity. God assured Moses, when he sent him to Pharaoh, that he would confirm his mission by miracles. And Christ gave the same assurance to his disciples when he sent them to preach the gospel. "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." All the true prophets and apostles had the promise of God that he would work miracles to manifest to the world that he sent them. Accordingly, they had a right to call upon God to work miracles, to confirm their divine mission. This right Elijah exercised, when Ahaziah sent a band of soldiers to apprehend him. "Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty, with his fifty. And he went up to him. And behold he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered, and said to the captain of fifty, *If I be a man of God*, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty." Elijah called upon God to fulfil his promise, and confirm his mission. This miracle was the fulfilment of God's promise, and pledged his veracity that Elijah was his prophet. Just so, when God wrought a miracle in favor of any prophet or apostle, he said,

by his conduct, which spake louder than words, "*This is my servant; hear ye him.*" Hence, God is said to *bear witness* to the divine mission of Christ and of the apostles, by giving them his own testimony of miracles. Christ says, "I have greater *witness* than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear *witness* of me, that *the Father hath sent me.* And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne *witness* of me." And of the apostles it is said, that "God did bear them witness, both with signs and *wonders*, and with divers miracles." A witness pledges his veracity. And when God witnessed the divine mission of Christ and of the apostles, he pledged his own veracity. Hence the evidence of miracles is the most plain, obvious and infallible proof of the divine mission of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles, that an infinitely wise and powerful and faithful God could give to them, and to those to whom they were sent. It is now necessary to observe once more,

5. That this infallible proof of revealed religion is perpetual, and justly claims the belief of all who enjoy the Bible. Some who seem to allow that miracles might be a temporary proof of revealed religion, yet deny that they can be a standing evidence of divine revelation. A late retailer of infidelity presumes to say, "A miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this, it requires a transfer of faith from God to man, to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous." This representation is extremely unjust and fallacious, because it confounds ideas which ought to be kept entirely distinct. The existence of miracles is one thing, and the evidence which their existence affords in favor of revealed religion is another. Our belief that miracles did really exist must depend upon human testimony; but our belief that they prove a divine mission must depend upon divine testimony. We must believe the reality of miracles upon the report of those who saw them performed; and they believed the existence of the miracles which they saw performed, upon the testimony of their own eyes, and ears, and other senses. The belief of the existence of miracles in both these cases is wholly founded upon human testimony, without any transfer of faith from God to man. Now this being true, it is easy to see that miracles afford us precisely the same evidence of a divine mission that they afforded the spectators themselves. The sacred writers have told us what miracles were wrought in favor of the prophets,

of Christ, and of the apostles; and now we have a just right, and fair opportunity to judge whether those miracles did really prove their divine mission. The miracles which were wrought in favor of Moses, give us the same evidence of his being sent of God, that they gave to Pharaoh and others who saw them. The miracles which were wrought in favor of Christ, give us the same evidence of his being the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world that they gave to the apostles, and the rest of the spectators of them. And the miracles which were wrought in favor of the apostles give us the same evidence of their divine mission that they gave to those before whom they were actually wrought. Hence, if Pharaoh ought to believe the divine mission of Moses, then we ought to believe it. If the Jews ought to believe the divine mission of Christ, then we ought to believe it. And if the Gentiles ought to believe the divine mission of the apostles, then we ought to believe it. The distance of time and place does not diminish the divine testimony of miracles in favor of revealed religion. It comes to us attested by the finger of God; and those who disbelieve it, we have no reason to think would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

SERMON IV.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. — Acts, iii. 15.

Peter made this declaration upon a very peculiar occasion. As he and John were going into the temple to pray, a man lame from his birth saw them and asked an alms. "Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man instantly leaps up, walks into the temple, and praises God. The spectators were filled with wonder and amazement. And when Peter saw it, he turned and said, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."

The subject which now comes before us is the resurrection of Christ. And in treating upon it, I propose,

I. To inquire whether it were impossible for God to raise Christ from the dead;

II. To inquire what sort of evidence of this truth we ought to expect; and,

III. To exhibit the evidence there is that God did raise him from the dead.

I. We are to inquire whether it were impossible that God should raise Christ from the dead. Some have thought it incredible that God should raise the dead; and were it impossible, it would be incredible. God can do every thing that is possible, but nothing that is impossible. It is impossible that God should cause a thing to exist and not to exist at the same time; and it was equally impossible that God should cause Christ to be both dead and alive at the same time. These are, natural impossibilities, not because they are above the power of God to effect, but because they are contradictions and absurdities which no power can effect. But we can see no absurdity or impossibility in raising a dead man to life; for it is undoubtedly as easy to divine power to restore the union between the soul and the body after it has been dissolved, as to establish such a union at first. So that there does not appear any more absurdity or impossibility in God's restoring the union between Christ's human body and human soul after it had been dissolved by death, than in establishing that union at first. And as there was no natural, so there was no moral impossibility in his raising Christ from the dead. That is morally impossible with God which is inconsistent with any part of his moral character. It is morally impossible that he should do any thing which is contrary to his justice, veracity, or immutable purpose. But it does not appear to have been contrary to his justice, veracity, or any immutable purpose, to raise Christ from the dead, whom he had promised that he should not see corruption. And since the resurrection of Christ was neither above the power, nor inconsistent with the moral character of God to effect, there is no absurdity in believing upon proper evidence that he did raise him from the dead. And supposing this was the case, let us inquire,

II. What sort of evidence we ought to expect in proof of it. Those who deny divine revelation say that we cannot have either *ocular* or *demonstrative* evidence of Christ's resurrection; and as to *moral* evidence, that is very uncertain and precarious. It is readily conceded that we are not to expect to find either ocular or demonstrative evidence of Christ's rising from the dead; yet we may justly expect to find such clear and conclusive moral evidence of the fact, as is sufficient to satisfy every impartial and candid mind.

Moral evidence is that which we receive from writings and verbal testimony, and which is founded upon the known connection between moral causes and effects. And though it does not amount to strict demonstration, yet in many cases it rises

to that certainty which carries full and irresistible conviction to the mind. We have no ocular or demonstrative evidence that our ancestors came from Europe; but we have such clear moral evidence of it, that we cannot seriously disbelieve it. For we cannot suppose that all the European and American historians should have been deceived, or have united to deceive others upon so plain a subject as the first settlement of the civilized inhabitants of this country. It is as natural and habitual to mankind in general to write and speak the truth when they have no temptation to the contrary, as it is to write and speak at all. Accordingly we find that all nations agree in admitting human writings and human testimony as satisfactory evidence, in all their secular concerns of a public or private nature. Written records and verbal testimony are deemed sufficient evidence to establish any truth or fact, before any civil court or human tribunal. Indeed to deny the validity of such moral evidence would throw the world into confusion, and sunder all the bands of civil society. But if we admit moral evidence to be satisfactory in all other important cases, why should we not admit it to be equally satisfactory in respect to the resurrection of Christ? As a past event, it requires and admits of no other kind of evidence. It only remains, therefore,

III. To exhibit the clear and full moral evidence we have, that Christ was actually raised from the dead. And,

1. The witnesses, who testified to the truth of this important fact, are in every respect worthy of entire credit. Peter declares in the text that he and the other apostles were witnesses of Christ's resurrection. And it must be allowed that they were men whose characters and qualifications for witnesses render them worthy to be believed. They were possessed of a clear discernment and sound judgment. They were capable of perceiving and relating the truth upon this subject in a plain, intelligible and consistent manner. Besides this, they had been personally and intimately acquainted with Christ several years before his death. They had heard him speak in private and in public. They had seen him work miracles. And they had often critically observed his general deportment, his personal appearance, and every feature of his face. They were therefore perfectly capable of determining, when he appeared to them after his resurrection, whether he had the same voice, the same figure and the same countenance that he had before his death. He was with them forty days after his passion, and ate and drank with them, and allowed them to satisfy themselves of the truth and reality of his resurrection in the most sensible and palpable manner. They were all slow of heart to believe that he was risen from the grave, and especially Thomas, one of the

twelve, to whom he condescended to say, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." And from a full conviction of the truth of his resurrection, he was constrained to cry, "My Lord, and my God!" The apostles, having such perfect personal knowledge of Christ's resurrection, were not afraid to publish the important truth in the most solemn and public manner. Peter boldly declares before a large concourse of people, that he had cured the impotent man in the name of Christ, whom God had raised from the dead. And all the apostles, wherever they went, always preached the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, though at the risk of losing every thing most valuable in life, and even life itself. They were therefore both competent and faithful witnesses. They exhibited every mark of truth and honesty. They all spoke the same things, and their number served to strengthen and corroborate their testimony. Or, if that should be doubted, the apostle tells us Christ was seen after his resurrection by above five hundred brethren at once. Would not the testimony of such witnesses be deemed sufficient to support any cause before any human tribunal? If we ought to place full faith in any human testimony, we ought to place full faith in the united and consistent testimony of the apostles, in favor of the resurrection of Christ. For,

2. If they had used any deception in their testimony, they must have been detected at the time of it. They gave their testimony when and where, if there had been any fraud in the case, it might have been most easily and fully discovered. It was within a few days after Christ's resurrection, that Peter and John publicly declared the fact at Jerusalem and in the temple, where Christ had taught, wrought miracles, and been personally known for several years, and where he had just been crucified and buried. His enemies remembered what they had said and done respecting his doctrines, his miracles and his crucifixion. They remembered that he professed to be the promised Messiah and king of the Jews, that he had foretold his death and resurrection, and that they had requested and obtained liberty of Pilate to take the best possible precaution against any deception that might be used respecting his rising from the dead. They had time, opportunity, authority, and every motive to call the apostles to account, and to punish them severely, if they could discover any fraud or falsehood in their testimony. Why then did they not discover some fraud or falsehood in the apostles, who boldly and publicly declared that they had actually seen and conversed with Christ after his resurrection? No reason can be given for this, but that what they said was true, and

could not be disproved by those who could and would have disproved it, had it been false. If the enemies of Christ had only discovered any deception in the testimony of the apostles, they would have discovered Christ to have been an impostor, and justified themselves in putting him to death; and, at the same time, defeated the design of his followers, and crushed the gospel at its birth. If the declaration of the apostles concerning the resurrection of Christ had been a falsehood, it must have been detected at the time of it; and as it was not, and could not be detected then, we must conclude that it was true, and that Christ was certainly raised from the dead according to the scriptures.

3. The Jewish nation were convinced that Christ was really raised from the dead. Though they were extremely loath to believe his resurrection, and took unlawful means to conceal the evidence of it, bribing the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre to say that his disciples came and stole his body while they slept, yet the true testimony of the apostles completely discredited the story of the soldiers. And when the supreme court of the nation apprehended the apostles themselves, and examined them critically concerning what they had publicly declared with respect to the resurrection of Christ, they maintained the truth of the fact, and no threatenings could deter them from continuing to preach the same doctrine. I will read the large and particular account of this legal process in reference to two of the apostles, Peter and John, which we have in the chapter following that of the text. "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day, for it was now eventide. Howbeit, many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which

was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther among the people, let us straightly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had farther threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them." This was the highest ecclesiastical council in the state. It was held at Jerusalem, where Christ had just been crucified and buried. It was called for the sole purpose of examining the apostles' testimony in respect to the resurrection of Christ, a testimony which had been instrumental the day before of converting five thousand men. The examination was very deliberate, and very strict, as well as very public. When it was finished, the council conferred together, and frankly acknowledged that they could find no falsehood, nor deception, nor any thing else in the apostles, for which they could condemn them. Accordingly, they determined only to command them not to preach any more, lest their testimony concerning the resurrection of Christ should be more extensively spread and believed among the people. As this council, who examined the apostles themselves, were constrained to believe that their testimony concerning Christ's resurrection was true, so their belief of the fact is tantamount to the belief of all the rest of the nation. And if the first men in the Jewish nation, who were best acquainted with Christ, who were the most prejudiced against him, and who were the most reluctant to believe the testimony of the apostles concerning his resurrection, were constrained to believe it, we may well believe it. That evidence which convinced the Jewish council of the truth of Christ's resurrection, and converted five thousand men to the

faith of the gospel, ought to be completely satisfactory to us at this day. It must be added,

4. That there could have been no deception in respect to Christ's resurrection, appears from the known circumstances of the case. The Jews took so much care and precaution to prevent deception, that, had the apostles or any of the friends of Christ been ever so much disposed to palm a cheat upon the world, they could not have done it. Matthew, giving an account of Christ's death and burial in the twenty-seventh chapter of his gospel, says, "Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." This seems to have been the most prudent and effectual method that could be devised, to prevent the disciples or any of the friends of Christ from coming and taking away his body in a clandestine manner, and to ascertain whether he actually rose from the dead or not. There is, therefore, no ground to suspect that there was any fraud or deception in the case. The whole story of the bribed soldiers is in its own nature inconsistent and absurd. It is not credible that the disciples should go to the sepulchre, and not perceive the guard that was set there. It is not credible that, if the guard were awake, they should attempt to take away the body of Christ. It is not credible that, if they saw all the guard asleep, and did attempt to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and to take away the body of Christ, they could have effected their purpose without waking the guard. And it is still more incredible that the guard should have known that they did come and take away his body while they were asleep. The whole affair of Christ's burial was so conducted by his friends and enemies, as to preclude the possibility of his body's being taken away in a clandestine manner. Joseph of Arimathea laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of a rock, and at the same time rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. Besides, when Christ actually rose, "Behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did

shake and became as dead men. And the angel said unto Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who had come to see the sepulchre, "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen as he said; come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, say ye, his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Such are the allowed circumstances of Christ's burial and resurrection; and, under such circumstances, was it possible that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, or that the disciples to whom they told what they had seen and heard at the sepulchre, or that Joseph of Arimathea, or that the chief priests and elders to whom their own guard told the truth at first, should have been deceived as to Christ's resurrection? They all undoubtedly believed the apostles, who were eye witnesses of his resurrection, and who testified, at the risk of their lives, that they saw him alive after his death. And we know that their testimony concerning this infinitely important event was believed by three thousand converts to Christianity on one day, and by five thousand on the next day, and by millions since, in the course of more than seventeen hundred years. According to all the principles of human nature, the apostles spoke the truth; and if we may believe any human testimony, or moral evidence, we may safely believe that God raised Christ from the dead.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If we have clear, satisfactory evidence that Christ rose from the dead, then we have good ground to believe that the gospel is true. The truth of the gospel rests entirely upon the truth of Christ's resurrection. If the apostles propagated a fraud and falsehood, with respect to the fact of Christ's rising from the dead, then the gospel they preached was a mere cunningly devised fable. But if we have clear and conclusive evidence of Christ's resurrection, then we have equally clear and conclusive evidence of the truth and divinity of the gospel. Our Saviour, before his death, suspended the highest and ultimate proof of the divinity of his person, and of the truth of his

doctrines, upon the event of his resurrection from the dead. He repeatedly and plainly told his disciples that he should be crucified and slain by wicked hands, and afterwards rise from the dead. He said, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He said in reference to his body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Sometime before his death, he showed unto his disciples, "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." These declarations were known not only to his friends, but to his enemies; who for that reason took peculiar care to ascertain the fact whether he did, or did not rise again, as he predicted. And if he had not risen again, according to his prediction, both his friends and enemies would have had a right to consider and call him an impostor. But by actually rising from the dead, he distinguished himself from all impostors, and exhibited the highest possible evidence that he was what he professed to be, the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. Accordingly, the apostles made the resurrection of Christ the principal subject of their preaching. Wherever they preached, whether among Jews or Gentiles, they boldly declared that Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead, and was the only all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. This was agreeable to the commission that Christ gave them to preach the gospel, just before he ascended to heaven. "And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." Thus Christ founds the truth of the gospel upon the truth of his resurrection, and he directs his apostles to found the truth of it upon that single and all-important fact. And agreeably to this, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that the gospel he had preached was founded entirely upon the truth of Christ's resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain — ye are yet in your sins." But if it be morally certain, as we have shown, that Christ was raised from the

dead, then it is morally certain that the gospel, with all its precepts, promises and threatenings, is infallibly true. And upon this foundation, it has stood the test of ages, and been mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds, and to the resisting of the most powerful attacks, of its most inveterate and subtile enemies.

2. If God raised Christ from the dead, then we may justly conclude that he made a complete and satisfactory atonement for sin, by his sufferings and death on the cross. If he had not been perfectly obedient to his Father's will, and faithfully performed every part of the work which he gave him to do, he would not have manifested his approbation of him by raising him from the dead. Christ requested his Father, before he died, that he would give him a peculiar mark of his approbation, on account of his fidelity in performing his mediatorial work. He goes to him and says, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." Such a mark of his approbation his Father gave him by raising him from the dead, as well as by receiving him to heaven. Hence says the apostle, Christ was "declared to be the son of God, with power according to the spirit of holiness *by the resurrection from the dead.*" Again, he represents the Father as exalting him to his own right hand, as a mark of approbation on account of what he did and suffered on the cross. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow — and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This was the highest possible mark of approbation that the Father could give him, on account of his dying the just for the unjust, making his soul a sacrifice for sin, and giving his life a ransom for many. When Christ had drunk the last drop of suffering on the cross, he cried, "It is finished!" The atonement for the sins of the world is made. And the truth of this declaration, God the Father sealed, by raising him from the dead.

3. Since God has raised Christ from the dead, we may be assured that he will completely accomplish the whole work of redemption. He has begun this great and arduous work, and performed the most difficult parts of it. He has come into the

world, and taken upon him human nature. He has lived a life of universal obedience and self-denial. He has died a painful and meritorious death, and he has risen triumphant from the grave. These were the most formidable evils and difficulties he had to meet and surmount in performing the great work of man's redemption. If he had fainted in the garden, or if he had been confined in the grave, he would have failed in his whole design. This his friends feared, and his enemies hoped, from the time of his death to the time of his resurrection. Then he soon removed the fears of his friends, and destroyed the hopes of his enemies. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; then to Peter, then to the twelve; and after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. Having completely convinced his friends of his resurrection to life, just before he left the world he called his eleven disciples together, and assured them that he had power, and was determined, to pursue the work he had undertaken, and would employ and assist them in carrying it into effect. "And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Since God has raised Christ from the dead, given him all power in heaven and earth, and made him to be head over all things to the church, we may confidently believe that he will continue to carry on, until he has finished, the whole work of man's redemption. His resurrection is a solid foundation to expect that he will do all the great and good things which he has promised to do for the salvation of those whom the Father has given him. Accordingly, when he was about to reveal to his beloved disciple John the future glory and prosperity of his kingdom, he mentions his death, resurrection, and supreme authority, as the infallible evidence of the full accomplishment of all his predictions. John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day; and heard behind me a great voice, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot. — And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that *liveth* and was dead; and behold, *I am alive for evermore*, Amen; and *have the keys of hell and of death. Write the*

things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." The resurrection of Christ is the primary and principal ground we have to believe that he will fully accomplish the whole work of redemption. Since he has risen from the dead, and holds the reigns of universal government, we may confidently expect that he will go on conquering and to conquer, until all his enemies are made his footstool, all the elect are called in, and all the promises and predictions of the gospel are fulfilled. Thus the resurrection of Christ is the richest source of divine consolation to all true believers. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says the apostle Peter, "who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

4. If Christ was literally raised from the dead, there is reason to believe that there will be a literal and general resurrection of the dead at the last day. Christ was literally raised from the dead. He arose in the same body in which he was laid in the tomb. Not only Thomas, but all the disciples, had a full belief of his body's being the same after his resurrection that it was before. And from Christ's literal resurrection, the apostle conclusively argues a literal and general resurrection of the dead. He says, "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The first fruits are always of the same nature as the future harvest. This was exemplified in respect to Christ's resurrection, by those who rose from the dead just after it. We are told that when he expired on the cross, "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." The bodies of these persons were certainly raised out of the graves in which they had been laid. Their resurrection was as literal as the resurrection of Christ. Our Saviour himself expressly declared that he would literally raise the dead at the last day. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Mr. Locke and many others have supposed that not the bodies, but the *souls* of men will be raised at the general resurrection.

Their opinion however, upon this subject, appears quite unscriptural. The Bible leads us to believe that the *bodies*, and not the souls of men, will be raised at the general resurrection. We are expressly told that the *graves* shall give up their dead, the *seas* shall give up their dead, *and death and hell* shall give up their dead. This representation implies that the bodies of men shall be raised from the places where they were at first laid, or where they shall be found at the last day. And the doctrine of a literal resurrection is corroborated by the account we have of Enoch and Elijah, who were translated both soul and body to heaven. Nor is there any weight in the philosophical objection against a literal resurrection, drawn from the great change of particles in the human body while alive, and the vast distance they may be scattered from one another after death. For God who formed the bodies of men, has knowledge, and power, and wisdom enough to find, collect, and unite them together, ages and ages after death. Our bodies are called tabernacles, in allusion to that in the wilderness; and that we know was so framed, that every joint and socket and pin, could be taken apart, and perfectly put together again. Why then should it be thought incredible that God should literally raise the dead at the general resurrection? The whole current of scripture ought to remove all objections and doubts respecting the doctrine of a general and literal resurrection of the body at the great and last day.

5. If God has raised Christ from the dead, invested him with supreme authority, and given him divine power to complete the great work of redemption, then we may be sure that he is preparing all things for a general judgment. The general resurrection and the general judgment are inseparably connected, and will take place together at the end of the world. The former is preparatory to the latter. The apostle founds the certainty of the general judgment upon the certainty of God's raising Christ from the dead, and appointing him to the government of the universe. Speaking of the wretched state of the heathen, he says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, *in that he hath raised him from the dead.*" The same apostle also declares that Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Christ cannot finish the work which his Father gave him to do, before he has raised mankind from the dead, called them together, judged them according to their works, and fixed them in their final and in-

terminable state of complete blessedness, or complete guilt and despair. Though more than seventeen hundred years have rolled away since the resurrection of Christ, and though as many more years may roll away before the general resurrection and general judgment, yet it is as certain that they will sooner or later come, as that Christ rose from the dead, and now lives to govern the world. And we are all as deeply interested in these solemn and important events now, as if they were to take place to-morrow. Though we all know this, yet we need to be repeatedly and solemnly reminded of it. The apostle Peter supposed that those who had heard and understood and believed (as well as others) the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, and the future and eternal consequences of it, were liable to forget their relation to and connection with those important and invisible realities, and he wrote a whole epistle on purpose to impress them deeply and lastingly upon their minds. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word, kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*" Nothing can be added to the weight and solemnity of this exhortation. But I may conclude the subject, by saying to every one present, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Amen.

SERMON V.

THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. — 2 Peter, i. 21.

Some able writers in favor of divine revelation have ventured to compound the matter with infidels, and have given up the inspiration of some parts of scripture for the sake of maintaining the inspiration of the rest. This looks like carrying candor and condescension too far, and betraying the cause which they mean to defend. It is not to be expected that unbelievers will be satisfied with their partial concessions; but will continue their demands until they allow them to place the whole Bible upon a level with the writings of uninspired men. There seems, however, to be no occasion for the least yielding on the part of believers, if they can only make it appear that, so long as the sacred penmen were employed in writing the books of the Old and New Testament, they were constantly moved and guided by the Holy Ghost. And this, it must be allowed, is expressly asserted in the words of our text. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It appears from the preceding verses, that the apostle is here speaking of scripture in general; and therefore his real meaning must be that the Holy Ghost was the supreme agent, and holy men were but mere instruments, in writing the word of God. Agreeably to this construction of the text, it will be the business of the ensuing discourse to make it appear,

That the book which we emphatically call the Bible, was written by the inspiration of suggestion.

I shall first explain the meaning of this general proposition; and then offer several considerations to establish the truth of it.

Let us, in the first place, inquire what is to be understood by the inspiration of suggestion. Some suppose there are three kinds of inspiration; which they distinguish from each other by calling the first, the inspiration of Superintendency; the second, the inspiration of Elevation; and the third, the inspiration of Suggestion.

The inspiration of Superintendency is supposed to be such a divine control over the sacred penmen, as left all their rational powers in their natural state, but yet constantly preserved them from writing any thing false or absurd.

The inspiration of elevation is supposed to be a certain divine impulse upon the minds of sacred writers, which warmed their imaginations and raised all their natural faculties to an unusual degree of vigor and activity.

And there can be no doubt but the inspiration of suggestion took place, "when the natural faculties of the sacred penmen were superseded, and God spake directly to their minds, making such discoveries to them as they could not have otherwise obtained, and dictating the very words in which such discoveries were to be communicated."

It was this last and highest kind of inspiration, which, we suppose, God was pleased to afford those holy men whom he employed in writing the books of the Old and New Testament. He not only directed them to write, but at the same time *suggested* what to write; so that, according to the literal sense of the text, they wrote exactly as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now the truth of this observation will appear, if we consider,

I. It was necessary that the sacred penmen should be *conscious* of divine inspiration, all the while they were writing. It was not sufficient for them barely to know that they *began* to write under the influence of the Spirit; but it was equally necessary for them to know how long the Spirit *continued to move* upon their minds. For nothing short of a constant realizing sense of his motion and direction, could give them full assurance that what they wrote was the infallible word of God, which they might honestly present to the world under the sanction of divine authority. It must be supposed, therefore, that they were actually conscious of some kind of inspiration, every moment while they were writing. But it is difficult to conceive how they could be conscious of the inspiration of superintendency, which suggests neither thoughts nor words. And it is no less difficult to conceive how they could be conscious of the inspiration of elevation, which only assists the natural powers of

the mind to operate in their natural way. Whereas it is easy to conceive how they could be conscious of the inspiration of suggestion. For this must have constantly and powerfully governed all their thoughts and words, just so long as it continued to operate. And whatever they wrote under the immediate and sensible influence of such a divine impulse, they might safely and confidently offer to the world as a divine revelation. Hence it is natural to conclude that they enjoyed, and were conscious of enjoying, the suggesting influences of the Spirit, all the while they were writing the sacred pages.

2. The Supreme Being was as able to afford them the highest, as the lowest kind of inspiration. He could as easily *suggest* thoughts and words to their minds, as either *superintend*, or *elevate* their intellectual faculties. This must be allowed by those who distinguish divine inspiration into various kinds. They suppose the Deity always granted the suggesting influence of the Spirit to the sacred penmen whenever they had occasion for such assistance; and can assign no other reason for its being sometimes suspended, but only that it was sometimes unnecessary. This, however, is much easier to suppose than to prove. For, if the sacred writers stood in constant need of *some* kind of inspiration, as they allow, how does it appear that any thing short of the inspiration of suggestion would afford them sufficient aid? And since it is natural to suppose that they did constantly need to be guided by the Holy Ghost all the while they were writing, it is natural to conclude that they were constantly favored with the inspiration of suggestion. This leads me to observe,

3. That the sacred penmen were utterly incapable of writing such a book as the Bible, without the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. The professed design of this book is, to afford weak and depraved creatures an infallible rule of faith and practice. But even holy men of God were incapable of writing a book which should answer this important purpose, without being constantly guided and dictated by the Holy Ghost. Mere superintendency could not afford them sufficient assistance. This could only preserve them from writing any thing false, or absurd, without imparting the least light or strength to their intellectual powers. And supposing they had written under such a divine protection, yet their writings must have been totally destitute of divine instruction, and might have been equally destitute of the common beauties and excellences of human compositions. A book may be written without a single error or falsehood, and yet be a weak, inaccurate and contemptible performance. Had it been possible, therefore, for God to preserve the sacred writers from every mistake or

blunder, without suggesting either thoughts or words to their minds, yet such a superintendency would have left them totally incapable of writing a divine revelation. Nor would they have been able to perform such a difficult and important work, had they been farther favored with the inspiration of elevation. It is true, this kind of inspiration might have guarded them in some measure against their natural weakness and imperfection, and given them some real assistance in their compositions. A divine elevating influence upon their minds might have enabled them to write with peculiar ease, animation and sublimity. But supposing their writings had posessed all these qualities, yet they would have wanted both divine information and divine authority; which alone could have rendered them the real word of God.

Now, if neither the superintending nor the elevating influences of the Spirit were sufficient to enlighten and direct the sacred penmen in writing the scriptures of truth, then it undeniably follows that they stood in constant and absolute need of the inspiration of suggestion. No lower or less constant assistance than this could enable them to write a book so free from error, and so full of information, as God designed the Bible should be. It is true, he did not intend the scriptures should reveal his will upon all religious subjects; nor so clearly reveal it upon some subjects, as to prevent all human doubts, mistakes, or disputes. But yet he meant that the Bible should be free from all human errors and imperfections, and contain all the truths which it was necessary to reveal, in order to answer the purposes of his providence and grace. And it is easy to see that every sentence, and even every word in such a book as this, was of too much importance to be written by any *unassisted* pen. Hence, it is natural to conclude, the Holy Ghost *suggested* every thought and word to the sacred penmen, all the while they were writing the holy scriptures. Besides,

4. To suppose that they sometimes wrote without the inspiration of suggestion, is the same as to suppose that they sometimes wrote without any inspiration at all. The distinguishing of inspiration into three kinds is a mere human invention, which has no foundation in scripture or reason. And those who make this distinction, appear to amuse themselves and others with words without ideas. The Supreme Being is able both to superintend and elevate the minds of men, in the common dispensations of providence and grace. Solomon tells us, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." In the exercise of such a universal control over the views, and thoughts, and words of men, God does nothing which is either supernatural or miraculous. But

inspiration, in every degree of it, always means something which is truly supernatural and miraculous, and which is essentially different from both common and special grace. This clearly appears in the case of the primitive christians. They were the subjects, not of common and special grace only, but of divine inspiration. "For to one was given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues." All these spiritual gifts partook of the nature of inspiration, and were truly miraculous. They were above nature, and such as the natural powers of the mind could not attain by any mere common or natural assistance. But the inspiration of superintendency, and the inspiration of elevation, have nothing supernatural or miraculous in them; nor can they be distinguished from common and special grace. This may be easily illustrated. Common and special grace leave all the intellectual faculties of the mind in their natural state; and so does what is called the inspiration of superintendency. Common and special grace sometimes enliven and invigorate the natural powers of the mind to a great and unusual degree; and so does what is called the inspiration of elevation. In short, no person is able to describe, nor even to conceive of any inspiration which is higher than common assistance, and yet at the same time lower than the inspiration of suggestion. It is no less contrary to reason to suppose there are three, than to suppose there are thirty kinds of inspiration. And the dictates of reason upon this subject are confirmed by the dictates of scripture, which speaks only of one kind of inspiration, and represents that one kind to be the moving of the Holy Ghost, or the inspiration of suggestion. This, therefore, was the only inspiration under which the sacred penmen wrote, so long as they were divinely inspired. And if they were divinely inspired all the while they were writing, then they all the while enjoyed the suggesting influences of the Spirit. But it is generally believed and maintained that they were, in some measure, really *inspired*, all the time they were writing the books of the Old and New Testament. And if we allow this to be true, then we must necessarily suppose that every book, and every sentence in every book, was written under the plenary inspiration of suggestion. I may now add,

5. That the sacred penmen profess to have written the scriptures under the immediate and constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. The writers of the Old Testament tell us that they saw visions; that the word of the Lord came to them; and that they were divinely authorized to sanction their warnings,

their reproofs and their predictions, with a Thus saith the Lord. By all these modes of expression, they solemnly profess to have written not according to their own will, but as they were directed and moved by the Divine Spirit. And this testimony of the prophets to their own inspiration is fully confirmed by the united testimony of the apostles. Peter says, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The apostle here asserts that all scripture in general is given by inspiration of God; and that all parts of scripture in particular, which are profitable either for doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction, are given by the same inspiration. These parts taken together, evidently comprise all the history, all the biography, all the poetry, all the prophecy, and all the precepts, promises and threatenings, to be found in the law and the prophets. This passage, therefore, testifies to the immediate inspiration of the whole, and of every part of the Old Testament writings. And the same apostle gives as ample testimony to the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament. He speaks of his own inspiration with great assurance. "But I *certify* you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." In another passage he more fully and expressly asserts that both he and the other apostles were favored with the inspiration of suggestion. "But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit;—which things also we speak; not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The apostle John also professes to have been divinely taught and directed, in writing his Revelation. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw." Thus the apostles and prophets profess to have written under the immediate inspiration of God, who dictated the matter, manner and style of their writings. And from this and the other considerations which have been offered, we have suffi-

cient reason to believe that the Bible was written from beginning to end, by the inspiration of suggestion.

But since this is a very important subject, which claims a fair and full discussion, it may be proper to take particular notice of the most weighty objections which may be made against the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures.

1. It may be said, there appears a great diversity in the manner and style of the sacred penmen, which cannot be easily reconciled with the supposition of their being equally and constantly guided by the inspiration of suggestion.

It is true, indeed, we plainly discover some variety in the manner and style of the sacred writers. Isaiah and Paul, as well as Moses, David and Solomon, who were men of education and refinement, write in a more pure and elevated style than the prophet Amos, who lived among the herdmen of Tekoah, and the apostle John, who lived among the fishermen of Galilee. But this is easy to be accounted for, by only supposing that God dictated to each sacred penman a manner and style corresponding to his own peculiar genius, education, and manner of living. Were a parent to dictate a letter for a child, would he not dictate it in a manner and style somewhat agreeable to the age, genius, and attainments of the child? And is there not as much reason why God should dictate a different manner and style to the different authors of the Old and New Testament, as why he should employ so many men of such different degrees of knowledge and refinement to write the sacred scriptures? We do not discover, therefore, any greater diversity in the manner and style of the sacred penmen, than we might reasonably expect to find, in case they wrote exactly as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But on the other hand, we find a much greater similarity in their manner and style than could be reasonably expected on supposition of their writing agreeably to their own genius and taste, without the suggesting influences of the Spirit. That great christian philosopher, Robert Boyle, and many other excellent judges of good composition, have justly observed that there is not only a simplicity, but a sublimity, in the style of scripture, which cannot be found in any other writings. This is not all. The sacred penmen have a manner, as well as a style, which is peculiar to themselves. They seem to avoid the common modes and forms of uninspired writers. They write in the most free, easy and authoritative manner. They enter upon their subjects without any formal introduction; they pursue their subjects without any formal arguments or dissertations; and they conclude their subjects without any formal reflections and recapitulations. Herein they not only differ

from others, but agree with one another. And this general similarity of manner, as well as of style, is a stronger evidence in favor of their plenary inspiration, than any inaccuracy or inelegance of language is, against it.

Besides, the manner and style of the sacred writers were of too much importance to be left to their own unassisted discretion and integrity. Will any wise general permit an under officer to deliver his special orders to the army, without dictating the expressions to be used? Or will any public body send an important message to any other public body, without dictating the words of the message? Can it be supposed, then, that God would suffer his imperfect, fallible creatures to publish his will, without dictating the manner and style in which his will should be published?

2. It may be said that the mistakes and contradictions to be found in the scriptures plainly refute the notion of their being written under the inspiration of suggestion.

To this it may be replied in general, that most of the supposed mistakes and contradictions to be found in the scriptures may be only apparent; and so might be fully reconciled or removed, if we were better acquainted with the original languages in which the sacred books were written, and with the customs and manners of the different ages and places in which the sacred penmen lived. But the direct and decisive answer to this objection is, that it operates with equal force against every kind of inspiration. This all must allow, who suppose that there are more kinds of inspiration than one; and who maintain that all those parts of scripture which were not written by the inspiration of suggestion, were written either by the inspiration of superintendency, or the inspiration of elevation. For, so long as God especially superintended, or especially elevated the minds of the sacred penmen, he must have effectually preserved them from all real contradictions and mistakes. Indeed, this objection refutes itself. For, if nothing short of the inspiration of suggestion could have preserved the sacred writers from falling into real errors, then it must be supposed that they were constantly dictated to by the Holy Ghost. And if they wrote under this plenary inspiration, then the merely *apparent* errors to be found in their writings must be placed to our own ignorance; and all the *real* contradictions and mistakes must be imputed to the ignorance, or inattention, or unfaithfulness, of transcribers and of translators.

3. It may be said, since God originally intended that the Bible should be transcribed by different hands and translated into different languages, there was no occasion for his suggesting every thought and word to the sacred penmen; because,

after all, their writings must be subject to human defects and imperfections.

It is sufficient to observe here, that every transcription and translation is commonly more or less perfect, in proportion to the greater or less perfection of the original. And since the scriptures were designed to be often transcribed and translated, this made it *more* necessary, instead of less, that they should be written, at first, with peculiar accuracy and precision. Men always write with great exactness, when they expect their writings will be frequently copied, or translated into various languages. The instructions to an ambassador at a foreign court are usually written with extraordinary care and attention; because it is naturally expected that such writings will be often transcribed and translated. And upon this ground, we may reasonably suppose that the Divine Spirit dictated every thought and word to the sacred penmen, to prevent gross errors and mistakes from finally creeping into their writings by frequent transcriptions and translations.

4. It may be said that the apostle Paul seems to acknowledge, in the seventh chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, that he wrote some things in that chapter according to his own private opinion, without the aid or authority of a plenary inspiration. In one verse he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And in another verse he says, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord."

If we understand these expressions literally, then we must suppose that the apostle and all the other sacred penmen always wrote under a plenary inspiration, only when they gave intimations to the contrary. If it were proper for one of these writers, then it was proper for all of them, to give notice when they wrote without a plenary inspiration. And if it were proper to give such notice in one instance, then it was proper in every instance, when they wrote by permission, and not of commandment. But we find no such notice given, except in the chapter under consideration; and therefore we may justly conclude that all the other parts of scripture were written by the immediate inspiration of God.

But if, in the second place, we understand the apostle as speaking *ironically* in the verses before us, then his expressions will carry no idea of his writing without divine aid and authority. And there is some ground to understand his words in this sense. He was not made a subject of special grace, nor called to be an apostle, until some time after Christ's ascension to heaven. This gave his enemies occasion to insinuate that he was inferior to the other apostles, in point of divine authority. And he knew that some of the Corinthians had imbibed this

prejudice against him; for he says, they sought a *proof* of Christ speaking in him. Hence we find in the close of this chapter, after he had been speaking ironically of his own inspiration, he says seriously, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God." That is, I think I have the supernatural and suggesting influences of the Spirit of God, as well as the rest of the apostles, whom you acknowledge to be divinely inspired. This explains his doubtful expressions, and ascertains the divine influence under which he wrote this chapter, and this and all his other epistles.

There is, however, a third answer to this objection, which appears to be the most satisfactory; and that is this. The apostle is here speaking upon the subject of marriage; and he intimates that he has more to say upon this subject than either of the prophets, or Christ had said upon it. Accordingly he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. To the rest speak I, not the Lord." By these expressions, he means to distinguish what he said from what other inspired teachers had said, upon the same subject. And to convince the Corinthians that he had not been speaking his own private opinion in reference to them in particular, but had been delivering, by divine authority, such precepts as should be universally and perpetually binding upon christians in general, he makes this explicit declaration in the seventeenth verse: "And so *ordain I* in all the churches."

On the whole, there appears no solid objection against the plenary inspiration of any part of the sacred scriptures; but, on the other hand, every argument which proves them to be partly, equally proves them to be altogether, given by the immediate inspiration of God.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Bible contains the very ideas and sentiments which were immediately suggested to the sacred penmen by the Divine Spirit, then great caution and circumspection ought to be used in explaining scripture. The words of scripture may not be lightly altered, nor expunged, nor supplied, nor wrested from their plain and obvious meaning according to the connection in which they stand. Some have used great freedom with the Bible, and treated it with less deference than they would have dared to treat an ancient Greek or Latin author. They have supplied places, where they imagined words were wanting. They have transposed not only words, but sentences, paragraphs, and even whole chapters. And all this has commonly been done, to support some favorite error, or to evade

some disagreeable doctrine. The advocates of Arminianism, Arianism, Socinianism, and Universalism, have done great violence to scripture, in this way. Their systems of religion are so contrary to the plain and literal sense of the Bible, that they have found themselves under the disagreeable necessity of distorting and disjointing the scriptures, in order to read them into their preconceived and preädopted schemes. But there is not, I believe, any essential or important doctrine of the Bible to be found in such dark or doubtful texts only, as require a great deal of learning and criticism to explain. If any scheme of religious sentiments cannot be discovered and supported by plain and intelligible passages of scripture, there is great reason to suspect the truth of it. If, for instance, no man can determine that all men will be saved, without reading the New Testament through repeatedly and critically in the original language, there is great reason to doubt whether the doctrine of universal salvation is really contained in the Bible. The most important doctrines of the gospel are so necessarily connected, and so repeatedly and plainly expressed, in different parts of scripture, that all men of common knowledge, and of common honesty, may easily discover them. And every person ought to be very cautious how he adopts any religious sentiments, which seem to contradict the general current of scripture, and which cannot be maintained, without denying, or explaining away, the plain and obvious meaning of many passages in the Bible.

2. If the divine Spirit suggested every word and thought to the holy penmen, then it is not strange that they did not understand their own writings. These the apostle tells us, in our context, they did not understand. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." By this it appears that the prophets did not understand those things which they wrote under the immediate influence and suggestion of the Spirit of Christ. And it is easy to conceive that the sacred writers should be ignorant of many things in their own writings, if they were not left to write according to their own natural and unassisted abilities. They might, by the aid of the Spirit, write precepts, predictions, promises, and threatenings, of whose import they were igno-

rant, that would be very intelligible and very useful, in future ages. They wrote not for themselves, but for others; not for present, but future times. And this affords an additional evidence of the plenary inspiration of all the sacred writings.

3. If the Bible was written under the inspiration of suggestion, then it is an infallible rule of faith, and the only standard by which to try our religious sentiments. When we are in doubt about our own religious opinions, or the religious opinions of others, we ought to carry them to the law and to the testimony, and abide the divine decision. Those sentiments which are agreeable to the Bible, are to be received as true; but those which are neither found in the Bible, nor are agreeable to it, are to be rejected as false. There is no other standard of superior authority to which we can appeal. We may not appeal from scripture to reason, if scripture be the word of God. But if it be not, then we may, with propriety, appeal from scripture to reason. Accordingly, we find that those who deny the plenary inspiration of the Bible, take the liberty of appealing from scripture to reason. Dr. Priestly, Mr. Lyndsey, and others, when they are pinched with scripture arguments against their Socinian sentiments, appeal from the opinion of the apostles, to the superior authority of reason. They consider the New Testament writers as fallible men, who wrote their own sentiments honestly, but who, being destitute of the inspiration of suggestion, might make mistakes in the most important doctrines of religion. And if it be allowed that the prophets and the apostles did write the prophetical, historical and doctrinal parts of the Bible, without the suggesting influences of the Spirit, then there is no more harm or impropriety in appealing from their writings to reason, than in appealing from the writings of other men to that superior standard. But if what we have endeavored to prove be true, that every word and sentiment in the Bible was immediately suggested to the sacred penmen by the Holy Ghost, then their writings are, strictly speaking, the word of God; and to appeal from their writings to reason, is the same as to appeal from God to man; which is absurd and criminal in the highest degree.

4. If holy men of old wrote as they were moved by God, then it is reasonable to expect that the Bible should bear clear and strong marks of its divine author. Every human composition bears marks of human imperfection. A divine composition, therefore, will as infallibly bear marks of divine perfection. Accordingly, when we look into the Bible, we find the image and superscription of the Deity on every page. It displays all the perfections of God. We see the power of God in the works of creation, providence and grace, which are ascribed to

him. We see the wisdom of God in the great scheme of redemption, which the scriptures reveal. We see the boundless knowledge of God in the prophecies of future events, which could be foreknown and foretold by no other than an omniscient being. We see the holiness of God in the precepts, and prohibitions, and penalties, contained in the Bible. We see the future state of all moral beings clearly described, which none but the Supreme Being could either know or describe. The Bible, in short, contains those things which we stand in the most need of knowing, and which God only could reveal to us. It has, therefore, every internal mark of its divine original and divine authority, which it is reasonable to expect that a divine revelation should bear on the face of it. We might as easily conceive that a number of men should have created a new material and intellectual world, as that they should have devised, composed and propagated such a book as the Bible, in which the character and designs of God are so clearly unfolded, and the final issue of things so clearly and justly revealed. As the Bible claims to be, so it proves itself to be, the word of God. For no other being or beings, could or would have written a book so honorable to God, so dishonorable to men, and so agreeable to the relations which creatures bear to one another, and to their great Creator and supreme Disposer. Those, therefore, who deny the divinity of the scriptures, betray their weakness, as well as wickedness.

5. If the Bible be the immediate revelation of God's mind and will to men, then it is a most precious book. Nothing can be more desirable and more important, than to know the mind and will of our Creator, our Sovereign, and our Supreme Judge. It is comparatively of little moment, whether we know the history of the world, the laws of nature, or the use of arts and sciences. All the books written upon these subjects are lighter than a feather, when put into the balance with the Bible. This book as far surpasses in value all other books, as our eternal interests surpass our temporal. No wonder, therefore, that a man after God's own heart should so highly esteem his word. David says unto God, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver!" He gives the reasons of his high estimation of the word of God in the nineteenth Psalm. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is

pure, enlightening the eyes. — The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb." All who regard the glory of God, and the eternal interests of their own souls, must highly prize the holy scriptures, which have brought life and immortality to light, and which are able to make them wise unto salvation.

6. If the Bible contains the mind and will of God, then all who enjoy it may know in this world what will be their state in the next. It clearly describes both heaven and hell, and the terms upon which we may obtain the one, and escape the other. All penitent, submissive and obedient believers, may find great and precious promises made to persons of their character in the Bible. And all impenitent, rebellious and unbelieving sinners, may find in the same book, great and dreadful threatenings denounced against persons of their character. The condition of every person in a future state will be correspondent with his character in this. Every person, therefore, by comparing his character with the word of God, may determine whether he is a child of wrath or an heir of heaven. For, at the last day, the books will be opened, and among other books, the sacred volume of the Bible will be opened, and those who enjoyed it will be judged and treated according to God's promises and threatenings contained in it. This Christ intimated, when he said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The words which he spake to his ministers, in his last commission, were these: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." All who will read the Bible impartially, may determine whether they are entitled to the enjoyments of heaven, or stand exposed to the miseries of the damned. If any live and die ignorant of their future condition, it must be owing to their negligence, or their unwillingness to be acquainted with the true state of their minds. But it must be very criminal and dangerous for those who have the sure word of prophecy in their hands, to shut their eyes against the light, and live and die in darkness.

7. If the Bible be indeed the word of God, then it is not strange that it has had such a great influence over the minds of men. No other book in the world has produced such great effects upon mankind as the Bible. Yea, all the books that have ever been published, have never had a thousandth part so much power to convince, persuade and govern the minds of men, as the scriptures of truth. The heathens wrote many books, in which they described the vanity of the world, the de-

formity of vice, the beauty of virtue, the shortness of life, the certainty of death, and even the fate of departed souls. But their writings never produced any great effect upon the hearts and lives of men. They were considered and treated as destitute of divine authority. But the word of God, contained in the Bible, has been quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. It has proved the means of awakening, convincing and converting thousands and thousands of mankind from the error of their ways. It has subdued and converted atheists, deists, heathen philosophers, pagan idolaters, Jewish infidels, and the most vicious and abandoned sinners, in all parts of the world where it has been sent. It has made its learned and bitter enemies burn their books which were in contradiction to it. These great and glorious and happy effects which have been produced by the instrumentality of the Bible, are clear and indubitable attestations to its divine original, and sacred authority. It is hard to determine whether it discovered greater folly, or greater malignity, in a late Infidel to say that any man might write as good a book as the Bible. Socrates and Plato, Seneca and Cicero, could not write so good a book. Their writings never converted their readers from idolatry, luxury, or immorality. But the Bible has converted millions and millions from the most absurd principles, and most vicious practices. And, we appeal even to infidels themselves, whether they do not approach the Bible with awe, read it with fear, and close it with a painful conviction of its divine authority.

SERMON VI.

REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. — Acts, xxvi. 25.

Paul was a chosen vessel to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, who had never been favored with the light of divine revelation. He was amply furnished, by nature and grace, for this great and arduous undertaking. Being a man of argument as well as of eloquence, he was qualified to address the understandings and consciences, as well as hearts, of his hearers, by displaying divine truths in the most clear and consistent light. It is said of him, in distinction from all the other apostles, that he *reasoned* in his preaching. He was often obliged to encounter the learning and sophistry of pagan priests and philosophers, in his private discourses. But at length he was called to make a more public and studied defence of himself and of his religion, in the presence of two Roman rulers. The words I have read are a part of his able and animated apology before Festus, and king Agrippa. In this defence, he first draws his own character both before and after he embraced the gospel; and then labors to make it appear that he had acted a proper part, in embracing Christianity, which was perfectly agreeable to the dictates of his own reason, enlightened and enlarged by the writings of Moses and the prophets. After mentioning his former opposition to Christ and his followers, his surprising conversion on his way to Damascus, and his commission from Christ to preach the gospel, he proceeds to say: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all

the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." Here Festus abruptly interrupted him in his plea, and "said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Paul meekly and firmly replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Though I have seen a heavenly vision, and conversed with the divine Redeemer himself; yet I am entirely free from enthusiasm or religious madness. I was once as much opposed to the religion of Christ, as you are; but I have been rationally convinced of its truth and divinity. I do not wish to display my learning or eloquence upon this subject, for I am persuaded it will bear the most thorough and critical examination of the soundest understanding. This seems to be the spirit of the apostle's declaration in the text; which naturally suggests this important inquiry: whether Christianity be a religion agreeable to reason.

To give light and satisfaction to the mind upon this subject, which lies at the foundation of all our future and eternal hopes, it is necessary to consider, in the first place, what we are to understand by the christian religion; in the next place, what we are to understand by reason; and in the last place, what ground there is to believe that Christianity is agreeable to reason.

I. We are to consider what we are to understand by the christian religion.

The religion, properly called christian, essentially differs from the religion of pagans, Mohammedans, Jews, and deists, and contains a system of divine truths, which centre in Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. It comprehends not only the doctrines and duties, which are said to be taught by Christ in the course of his ministry, but all those things which are said to be taught by the inspired writers of the Old and New Testament. According to this general description of Christianity, it is easy to perceive that there are two things which deserve a more particular consideration.

1. That Christianity is a *revealed* religion, and draws its origin from a higher source than the mere light of nature. It is not of man, but of God. "I certify you, brethren," says

the apostle, "that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ." In another epistle he asserts, "All scripture is given by *inspiration* of God." The apostle Peter also speaks the same language upon this subject. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost.*" Christianity is no human discovery, but a religion which comes to us through the medium of divine inspiration. Though it contains some things which were known by the light of nature, yet they were not known in their relation to Christ, and to the work of redemption. So that, strictly speaking, Christianity is altogether a *revealed* religion. Besides,

2. This revealed religion is designed for none but sinful and guilty creatures. In this respect, it totally differs from that natural religion which is sufficient for innocent creatures, who have never disobeyed their Maker, nor incurred his displeasure. It always has been and always will be sufficient for the holy angels to worship God agreeably to the natural dictates of their enlarged understandings and benevolent hearts; and the same natural religion was sufficient for Adam, so long as he retained his primitive purity and innocence. But as soon as he involved himself and his posterity in sin and guilt, natural religion could no longer be of any avail to him or to them. Their relation to God, and his relation to them, was materially altered. Instead of their being his dutiful servants, they were his rebellious subjects; and instead of his being their reconciled Father, he was their offended Sovereign and supreme Judge; so that upon his part, no friendly intercourse could possibly exist, through the medium of mere natural religion. After this, no other religion could recover the forfeited favor of God, but that which was revealed, and which was adapted to their guilty and perishing condition. And such is the nature and design of Christianity, according to the representations of scripture. Christ gives this just and comprehensive description of it. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And agreeably to this, he told the world, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Paul likewise, in his defence before Agrippa, declares that Christ sent him to preach his religion, which was designed "to open the eyes of sinners, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Christianity is the religion which God has devised and revealed to men for their recovery from their fallen and perishing state;

and it is completely adapted in all its parts, to answer this most gracious and important design. Having shown what Christianity is, in distinction from all other religions which have ever been devised or practiced in the world, I proceed in the next place,

II. To consider what we are to understand by reason, in this discourse upon the reasonableness of Christianity.

Reason is one of the most common words in our language; and in common cases is well understood and properly used. But when it is employed in relation to Christianity, as it often is, there is no word more abused or misapplied. This renders it necessary, in treating upon the present subject, to explain the term with precision and accuracy. Some make a distinction between reason and reasoning. By reason they mean the power of perceiving the agreement or disagreement of ideas in plain propositions. By reasoning they mean the power of arranging ideas, so as to infer or demonstrate one truth from another. But without pretending to determine whether there be any foundation for this distinction, I proceed to say, that by reason, in this discourse, I mean that power, faculty, or capacity of the mind, by which we are able to discern the agreement and disagreement of ideas, to form them into distinct propositions, and to draw just conclusions from them. Now this capacity may be greatly strengthened and improved by exercise. This appears from the different improvements which have been made, in almost every branch of human knowledge. What a wide difference appears between civilized and uncivilized nations, in regard to the arts and sciences. This difference is principally owing to the different cultivation of the reasoning powers. It is hard to conceive to what extent reason may be improved by exercise. How many truths did Newton investigate from this plain proposition: "All matter tends to rest, and cannot move without a mover!" And how many truths have mankind in general derived from another proposition equally plain: "That our senses are to be trusted!" We all know, by what we see in others and what we find in ourselves, that every intellectual faculty may be greatly improved by exercise. But it is of more importance to observe that reason may be assisted, as well as cultivated. The bodily eye can be assisted by glasses. Let a person look through a microscope, and he can discern things extremely small; or let him look through a telescope, and he can discover objects immensely distant. But if the natural eye may be assisted by glasses, why may not the mental eye be equally assisted by divine revelation? Suppose God should reveal to a certain astronomer the exact magnitude of the sun, and its precise distance

from the earth, would it not greatly assist him in making many new and important discoveries in astronomy? So, if God has revealed certain truths respecting the works of creation, providence and redemption, must we not suppose that this revelation may greatly assist mankind in their reasonings upon natural, moral and religious subjects? By reason, therefore, in relation to Christianity, we are to understand the natural power, faculty, or capacity of discerning and investigating truth, as improved by exercise, and assisted by divine revelation. It is now time to consider,

III. What ground there is to believe that Christianity is a religion agreeable to reason.

Here we are not to inquire whether Christianity be *discoverable* by reason, because we have seen that it comes to us under the profession and sanction of divine revelation. The only inquiry is, whether Christianity, as it is revealed in the gospel, be a religion agreeable to reason. Upon this I would observe,

1. It is agreeable to reason that Christianity, which is designed for the recovery of sinners from their lost and guilty state, should be a *revealed* religion. Unassisted reason, in its most improved state, could never discover a religion which could restore sinners to the forfeited favor of God. When the angels, who kept their first estate, saw the defection and revolt of their fellow angels, they could not and did not discover any religion which could rescue them from deserved destruction; but gave them up as irrecoverably lost. They knew it was the duty of those rebels to repent and submit to their offended sovereign; but they could not see how repentance and submission could restore them to the divine favor. So when they saw the apostacy of the human race, they could not devise any religion which was adapted to their deplorable state, and which would have the least tendency to prevent their everlasting ruin. Nor could Adam himself. This appears from his shunning the divine presence, in complete despair. He undoubtedly roused up all his reasoning powers, but the most vigorous exercise of these, could only strip him of all hope from his righteous Lawgiver. He could know and feel that he ought to repent and submit to his supreme Judge; but he could not see how his supreme Judge could consistently pardon and save him, on the ground of mere repentance and submission. And ever since his first offence, none of his posterity have been able to see that repentance and submission are any proper ground of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. If there be any religion, therefore, in this fallen world, which is completely adapted to save fallen creatures, it must have originated in the divine mind, and come to us by a divine revelation. And since Christianity

is adapted to this purpose, and comes to us in this way, it is so far perfectly agreeable to reason. This naturally leads us to observe,

2. That Christianity brings with it such evidence of this divine origin, as might be reasonably expected. It belongs to the province of reason to judge, whether the credentials of a pretended revelation are sufficient to support it. Christianity would not be a reasonable religion, if it did not exhibit proper testimonials of its divine original. But in this respect, it is certainly agreeable to reason. It brings with it two kinds of evidence, which are the most infallible and irresistible. These are miracles and prophecy. Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, wrought many miracles, to confirm their divine mission, and the truth of all their doctrines and declarations. Those miracles extorted the belief of both friends and enemies. The magicians acknowledged the finger of God in the miracles of Moses; and the Scribes and Pharisees acknowledged that Christ did many miracles. This is the highest kind of evidence that reason can discover or demand in favor of Christianity, and a higher testimony than has ever been given in favor of any false religion. When Mohammed was called upon to work miracles in testimony of his pretended revelations, he refused to make the attempt, lest he should discover his impotence and falsehood. But those who wrote the sacred Book which contains the Christian religion, clearly exhibited this supernatural testimony in their favor. Besides, they confirmed their divine authority by prophecies as well as miracles. Their predictions of many great and interesting events have been fulfilled, and are still fulfilling before the eyes of the world. Have not the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman monarchies risen and fallen, as they foretold? Has not Christ come, and suffered, and died, and risen again according to the scriptures? Has not Jerusalem been destroyed, and the Jews dispersed, agreeably to the predictions of Christ? Has not the Man of sin appeared and acted in the manner which Daniel and Paul foresaw and foretold? And are not the seed of Jacob and the posterity of Ishmael, by their situation and conduct, visibly fulfilling what was predicted of them, several thousand years ago? This fulfilment of prophecy, like a miracle, is a divine testimony in favor of Christianity, which is superior to any other testimony that could be given. The christian religion is perfectly agreeable to reason in point of evidence, for it brings with it the highest testimony that can be conceived, expected or desired.

3. Christianity exhibits such things, as it might be reasonably expected a *revealed* religion should exhibit. It exhibits the

character and state of man both before and after he became a sinner. It exhibits the gracious design of the ever blessed Trinity, to save our fallen race from sin and misery. It exhibits the character and conduct of the church and of their enemies. It exhibits some of the most extraordinary and important changes and revolutions which have taken place among the nations of the earth. It exhibits the great preparations which were made for the coming, the death, and sufferings of the divine Redeemer. In a word, it exhibits those things which none but God could exhibit, and which were the most useful and necessary for mankind to know, in their present guilty and perishing situation. It is just such a revelation as it might be reasonably expected God would give to mankind, if he intended to show them mercy. Christianity bears upon the very face of it, the image and superscription of the Deity, and has every internal mark of its coming from God, which the soundest reason can suggest or demand.

4. The religion of Christ is agreeable to reason, in regard to the doctrines which it contains and inculcates. The doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is agreeable to reason, improved and assisted by divine revelation. It is reasonable to think that the eternal God should exist in a mysterious, incomprehensible manner; and when he tells us so, it is reasonable to believe his declaration concerning his own existence. The doctrine of Christ's incarnation is agreeable to reason, in the same sense that the doctrine of the Trinity is. Why should it be thought incredible, that he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should take upon him the fashion of man, and become personally united with human nature, to save our sinful world? It was worthy of God to send his Son for this purpose, and worthy of his Son to come into our nature, and into our world, to answer such a wise and benevolent design. It is therefore agreeable to the plainest dictates of reason to believe what he who perfectly knows has told us, that "God was manifest in the flesh." It is reasonable to suppose that a *revealed* religion should contain some things which mankind could not *discover*, nor *comprehend*, by reason; and therefore the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the incarnation of Christ, render Christianity not less, but more agreeable to improved and assisted reason.

As to the other christian doctrines, which are not considered mysterious, they are agreeable to reason, in the same sense in which all other truths are so, that depend upon a train of clear and fair reasoning. The doctrine of atonement, for instance, which is the most essential and peculiar principle of Christianity, approves itself to every man's reason, properly exercised

and assisted. Though reason could not discover how an atonement for sin could be made, yet now it is made and revealed, reason can discern the propriety of God's pardoning penitent sinners on account of it. The doctrines concerning the divine purposes, and the divine agency in the natural and moral world; concerning the total depravity and renovation of the human heart; concerning the final perseverance of saints; and concerning the future rewards and punishments of the righteous and wicked; are all agreeable to reason, when viewed in their proper dependence upon, and connection with each other, in the great system of Christianity. It is true, indeed, that very few men are capable of tracing all the doctrines of the gospel in their intimate relation to, and connection with each other, and so many may remain ignorant of the reasonableness of some particular articles. But this is no more an evidence that those particular articles of Christianity are not agreeable to reason, than a man's ignorance of certain mathematical demonstrations is an evidence that those demonstrations are not agreeable to reason. A man must study mathematics, in order to see how the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. A man must study astronomy, in order to see how the sun or the moon will be eclipsed at a certain time and in a certain place. So a man must search the scriptures, in order to see the reasonableness of Christianity, which contains a connected system of divine truths. Let these be impartially examined, and fairly traced through their various relations and connections, and the deepest as well as plainest things contained in the gospel will appear perfectly agreeable to reason. This leads me to observe, once more,

5. That the reasonableness of Christianity appears from the conviction that it has actually carried to the reason and conscience of mankind, in all ages. It has made its way in the world, not by foreign and exterior aid, but by its own intrinsic truth and excellence. Other religions have been propagated by the force of arms and the power of the civil magistrate. But Christianity has made its way, not only without, but against human power and authority, and approved itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It has been called before the bar of kings, judges and philosophers, and prevailed. It made Felix tremble, and Agrippa say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." It convinced a judge of the court of Athens, and several other respectable characters in that city. It convinced Constantine the Great, and multitudes of his most eminent subjects. It convinced a Bacon, a Boyle, a Locke, a Newton, and a Johnson, in Britain; and it has produced the same effect in the minds of the most eminent men, of all professions, in

America. Some of the most ingenious and learned among the laity as well as clergy, have appeared as advocates for Christianity, and refuted every objection of its enemies beyond the possibility of reply. Hume never presumed to reply to Bishop Berkley, nor Gibbon to Bishop Watson, nor Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury to those who exposed their sophistry and malignity. This triumph of Christianity over learning, philosophy, bigotry and superstition, is a strong and conclusive argument that it is no cunningly devised fable, but a scheme of salvation, devised and adopted by the wisdom and grace of God, and perfectly agreeable to the dictates of right reason.

This subject now very naturally suggests some things which deserve our serious consideration, at the present day, and especially on the present occasion.

1. It suggests the absurdity of setting up natural religion in opposition to revealed. There is no doubt but mankind are able, by the proper exercise of their reason, to discover natural religion. If they seriously and attentively consider the works of creation and providence, they may be rationally convinced of the being and perfections of God, and of their obligations to love and adore him, as their creator, preserver and benefactor. But it is absurd for them to imagine that because they have discovered this natural religion, they have no need of any other. For natural religion is the religion of innocent, but not of guilty creatures. It is no less absurd for fallen men to depend upon natural religion, than it would be for fallen angels to depend upon it. They however have never been guilty of this absurdity. Their clear knowledge of natural religion has been a source of despair instead of hope, and made them fear and tremble before a sin-hating and sin-avenging God. And the same knowledge has a direct tendency to produce the same effects in the minds of our apostate race. But yet our modern infidels have the stupidity and presumption to set up natural religion in opposition to revealed. Lord Herbert framed a system of natural religion, with a view to supersede and subvert Christianity. And after him, Tindal, a noted infidel, wrote a treatise under the title of, "Christianity as old as the Creation." By this, he meant to insinuate that natural religion, which is as old as the creation, is the only true and rational religion; and of consequence, that Christianity is a gross absurdity and delusion. We readily admit that the light of nature may discover natural religion; and were it sufficient for the salvation of sinners, there would be no need of a supernatural and revealed religion. But since natural religion cannot exist in this guilty world, and if it did exist, could not save sinners from the wrath to come, the deists stand upon nothing while they presume to set

up natural religion, and employ it as a weapon to destroy Christianity. Let them only reflect that they are fallen, guilty creatures, and reason correctly from this self-evident truth, and they will feel the whole ground they stand on to give way, and find themselves plunged in utter darkness and despair. The whole controversy between christians and deists turns upon the truth of total depravity. This single truth completely refutes deism and establishes Christianity.

2. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then it has a natural tendency to subvert all other religions in the world. All other religions are the inventions of men, and essentially different from Christianity, which God alone was able to devise and reveal to the sinful race of Adam. Those who see the reasonableness of this revealed and supernatural religion, must of course see the unreasonableness and absurdity of every other religious system. Accordingly, we find Christianity has actually turned the religious world upside down, wherever it has been embraced. It has converted men from Paganism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Deism, Socinianism, Arianism, Arminianism and Universalism. Hence it has been called the unsociable religion. False religions will unite with each other; but Christianity condemns and opposes every false scheme, and every false principle of religion.

3. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then the more clearly it is distinguished from natural religion, the more reasonable it will appear. Many who have undertaken to maintain the reasonableness of Christianity, have done it great injury, by pruning off its great and essential peculiarities, and endeavoring to bring it down as near as possible to natural religion, or the religion of reason. Socinians, Arians and Arminians have adopted this method to exhibit Christianity in what they view the most reasonable and amiable light. But this is basely betraying, instead of promoting the cause of revealed religion. The only proper way to convince mankind of the reasonableness of Christianity, is to represent it as a scheme of divine wisdom and grace, which contains mysteries and doctrines which no created reason could discover nor comprehend. The doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the incarnation and vicarious sufferings of Christ, and the doctrines of human depravity and special, irresistible grace, are essential branches of the christian religion, and constitute its beauty and reasonableness. And the more clearly we display these peculiarities of Christianity, which distinguish it from natural religion, the more reasonable we shall make it appear in the eyes of infidels, and the more worthy of the cordial approbation of penitent sinners.

4. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then all who really understand it must necessarily believe it. Whatever gets hold of reason in any man, he is constrained to believe, in spite of his heart. His heart may for a while obstruct, or eventually hinder truth from getting hold of his reason; but if it does not prevent truth from coming into his understanding, it cannot prevent his belief of it. A man's heart may prevent his demonstrating a mathematical truth; but it cannot prevent his believing that truth after he has demonstrated it. This holds true of Christianity. If a man will allow himself to examine, or suffer himself to be taught, the great and distinguishing doctrines of the christian religion, so as really to understand them, he cannot resist conviction, but must believe them to be true, whether they are agreeable or disagreeable to his heart. If the heart does not prevent the exercise, it cannot prevent the verdict of reason. Christianity displays the manifold wisdom of God, and therefore must approve itself to every intelligent creature who really understands it. It is the *reasonableness* of this revealed religion that has convinced ninety-nine in a hundred, if not nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand, of those who in all ages have embraced it, either in speculation or practice. If we can only make men understand the gospel, we may be sure we have gained their everlasting belief; in consequence of which they must for ever hold the truth, either in righteousness or unrighteousness.

5. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then it is no mark of superior penetration and knowledge to disbelieve it. That men of great information and acuteness in reasoning have disbelieved the gospel, we would not pretend to deny; but that their disbelief has been owing to their superior learning and ingenuity, we must be allowed to call in question. Reason can never prevent men's seeing the reasonableness of a perfectly reasonable religion; but only prevent their seeing the reasonableness of such religions as are founded in ignorance, delusion, or falsehood. If Christianity were a cunningly devised fable, it might be justly expected that men of the first abilities should be the first to discover and to disbelieve the imposture. But since it is founded in the highest reason, the disbelief of it, in both the learned and unlearned, can originate from no other source than that native corruption of heart which blinds the understanding, and creates either stupidity, inattention or prejudice, respecting the glorious gospel of the blessed God. To this criminal cause our Saviour himself ascribes the infidelity of his hearers. "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. — If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth

God's words; ye therefore hear them not, *because ye are not of God.*"

6. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then it is no evidence of a weak or disordered mind to believe and love the gospel. It is every way suited to gain the reason and conscience, and to raise the affections of all those who realize their guilty and perishing condition by nature, and are willing to return to God upon the most reasonable and gracious terms. It was a very unjust and unmerited reproach which the enemies of Christianity cast upon those who gladly received the word on the day of Pentecost, that their minds were disordered by new wine. And it was equally absurd and malignant in Festus, after the apostle had related his conversion, and religious views and feelings, to cry out in a sneer, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But the apostle replied with a pertinence and solemnity, directly suited to fill his mind with shame and remorse, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." In this striking instance, "Wisdom was justified of her children." Our Saviour forewarned his followers of what they had to expect from unbelievers. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." But it is preposterous folly in infidels to sneer at the children of light, as weak or disordered in their intellects, because they believe and love and prize that reasonable and glorious gospel which the highest order of intelligences contemplate with admiration and ecstasy. The most eminent christians, whether high or low, whether learned or unlearned, act the most reasonable and proper part in regard to religion, of any men in the world. They are the wise, who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, when the impenitent and unbelieving shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

The reasonableness of Christianity is a fruitful subject, and did the season and circumstances admit, I might easily enlarge upon it. But I will relieve the patience of my respected audience, after saying a few words by way of address to the pastor elect.*

Dear Sir: You have acted a reasonable part in preferring the work of the ministry to any other calling. It is the most reasonable, the most useful, and the most agreeable service in which God allows any of our fallen, guilty race to be employed.

* Rev Gaius Conant, ordained at Paxton, Feb. 17, 1808.

If you understand, and believe, and love the religion of Christ, you will find peculiar satisfaction in leading your fellow creatures to the knowledge and love of those revealed truths which are able to make them wise unto salvation. Christianity is so perfectly and profoundly reasonable, that you will never have the least occasion to handle the word of God deceitfully, in order to establish any doctrine, or to inculcate any duty, or to reprove any vice, or to refute any error, or to avoid any inconsistency in the sentiments you deliver. While you preach the great and interesting truths of the gospel in their harmony and connection, you will approve yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The reasonableness of Christianity affords you great encouragement to preach it with the utmost plainness and fidelity. At first view, it appears surprising that mankind, who are by nature enemies of the cross of Christ, should suffer ministers to preach the painful, mortifying doctrines of the gospel. But when we consider that all men have reason and conscience, and that a reasonable religion will take hold of these inflexible powers of the mind in spite of their hearts, it is not so strange that sinners will hear what their reason and conscience constrain them to believe is strictly true, and infinitely important. The faithful preacher always has the reason and conscience of every man on his side, which is the firmest hold of the human mind. If you preach the gospel plainly and fully, you will make it appear reasonable; and if you make it appear reasonable, you will constrain your people not only to believe it, but to feel their infinite obligations to obey it from the heart. If you yourself clearly see, and sensibly feel the importance of divine truths, you can scarcely fail of arresting the attention, piercing the consciences, and impressing the hearts of your hearers. The gospel is a two-edged sword, which has slain its thousands and ten thousands. It is not a carnal weapon, but "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Only be faithful in pointing this weapon to your own breast, and to the breasts of your people, and you will certainly gain all which you have any reason to expect, or even to desire; and that is to be a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To this may you and all the people in this place say, Amen.

PART III.

THE TRINITY.

SERMONS VII.—IX.

SERMON VII.

THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY NOT REPUGNANT TO SOUND REASON.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. —1 John, v. 7.

In treating on revealed religion, men have often run into two extremes. Some have been fond of finding mysteries every where in the Bible; while others have been equally fond of exploding all mysteries from divine revelation. Here the truth seems to lie in the medium. Many parts of scripture are plain and easy to be understood; but some parts are truly mysterious, and surpass the utmost limits of human comprehension. Of all religious mysteries, the distinction of persons in the divine nature must be allowed to be the greatest. Accordingly, upon this subject there has been the greatest absurdity as well as ingenuity displayed, in attempting to explain a real mystery. But though a mystery cannot be comprehended, nor consequently explained, yet it may be stated, and distinguished from a real absurdity. And this is the only object of the present discourse.

The words which I have read, plainly represent the Divine Being as existing in a mysterious manner; though their primary intention is, to point out the united testimony of each person in the Godhead to the divinity of Christ. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." The Father testified to the divinity of Christ at his baptism, when he declared with an audible voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost testified to his divinity at the same time, by "descend-

ing upon him in the form of a dove." And Christ testified to his own divinity, by his public declarations and miraculous works. "And these three are one;" that is, one God, one divine Being. This, indeed, is a profound mystery, which calls for peculiar precaution in both speaker and hearer, lest the one should say, or the other receive, any thing which is derogatory to the supreme and incomprehensible Jehovah.

I shall first attempt to state the doctrine of the Trinity according to scripture; and then endeavor to make it appear that there is nothing in this doctrine repugnant to the dictates of sound reason.

I. I shall attempt to show what conceptions the scripture leads us to form of the peculiar mode of the divine existence. And here I may observe,

1. The scripture leads us to conceive of God, the first and supreme Being, as existing in three distinct persons. I use this word, because there appears to be no better, in our language, by which to express that Trinity in Unity, which is peculiar to the one living and true God. Indeed, there is no word in any language which can convey a precise idea of this incomprehensible distinction in the divine nature; for it is not similar to any other distinction in the minds of moral beings. So that it is very immaterial, whether we use the name person, or any other name, or a circumlocution instead of a name, in discoursing upon this subject. Let me say, then, the one living and true God exists in such a manner that there is a proper foundation in his nature to speak of himself in the first, second and third person, and say I, Thou and He, meaning only himself. This is a mode of existence which is peculiar to the first and supreme Being. No created being can properly speak of himself in any other than the first person, I. Thou and he, among creatures, denote another being as well as another person. But God can with propriety say I, thou and he, and mean only himself. There is a certain *something* in the divine nature, which lays a proper foundation for such a personal distinction. But what that *something* is, can neither be described, nor conceived. Here lies the whole mystery of the Trinity. And since this mystery cannot be comprehended, it is absurd to borrow any similitudes from either matter or spirit, or from both united, in order to explain it. All the illustrations which have ever been employed upon the mysterious mode of the divine existence, have always served to obscure, rather than elucidate the subject; because there is nothing in the whole circle of nature which bears the least resemblance to three persons in one God.

Some have supposed there is a resemblance between this

doctrine and the union of soul, spirit and body, in one man. But allowing that man is made up of these three constituent parts, yet it is easy to perceive that these three parts make but one person, as well as one man. For a man, speaking of himself, cannot say thy soul, nor his soul; thy spirit, nor his spirit; thy body, nor his body; but only my soul, my spirit, my body. The single man, who is composed of soul, spirit and body, is also a single person; but God is one being in three persons. And here the similitude totally fails of illustrating the principal thing intended.

Some have endeavored to illustrate the distinction of persons in the divine nature by what they call the cardinal properties of the soul; namely, understanding, will and affections. But supposing this to be a proper analysis of the human mind; yet the similitude drawn from it fails in the same respect that the former did. For these three properties of the soul are not *personal* properties; and my understanding, my will, my affections, are not thine, nor his, nor any second, nor third person's. Hence the similitude exhibits no illustration of three distinct persons in the one undivided essence of the Deity.

Some would consider the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one *person* as well as one being, acting in three distinct offices; as those of Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And this idea of the Trinity in Unity they would illustrate by one man's sustaining three distinct offices; such as Justice, Senator, and Judge. But this, like every other similitude, only serves to sink or destroy the scripture doctrine of three persons in the one supreme, self-existent Being. The profound mystery of the Trinity, as represented in scripture, necessarily carries in it a distinction of persons in the divine essence. For nothing short of three distinct persons in the one undivided Deity can render it proper for him to speak of himself in the first, second, and third person, I, thou, and he. Hence the scripture represents the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as distinctly possessed of personal properties. The Father is represented as being able to understand, to will and to act of himself. The Son is represented as being able to understand, to will and to act of himself. And the Holy Ghost is represented as being able to understand, to will and to act of himself. According to these representations, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct persons, or agents. Accordingly, they speak to and of each other as such. The Father speaks to and of his Son as a distinct person. "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Again, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Son speaks to and of the Father as a distinct person. "O! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass

from me." Again, "It is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say that he is your God." The Holy Ghost speaks of the Son as a distinct person. "As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice," that is, the voice of Christ, "harden not your hearts." This mode of speaking plainly supposes that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons. And upon this ground, the one living and true God is called more than a hundred times, in scripture, by a name in the plural number. But God's speaking of himself in the same manner, carries much stronger evidence of his existing a Trinity in Unity. Thus we read, "God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." Again we read, "The Lord God said, The man is become as one of *us*." Again we read, "Go to; let *us* go down, and there confound their language." And Isaiah says, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us?*" Thus the scripture leads us to conceive of the one living and true God, as existing in three distinct persons, each of whom is possessed of all personal properties, and is able to understand, to will and to act, as a free, voluntary, almighty agent. Hence,

2. The scripture represents the three persons in the sacred Trinity as absolutely equal in every divine perfection. We find the same names, the same attributes, and the same works ascribed to each person. Is the Father called God? the same name is given to the Son and Spirit. Are eternity, omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence ascribed to the Father? the same divine attributes are ascribed to the Son and Spirit. Is the Father represented as concerned in the work of creation? the Son and Spirit are represented as equally concerned in it. Is the Father to be honored by religious worship? so are the Son and Spirit. All these representations of the divinity and equality of the three persons in the sacred Trinity are to be found in the Bible. Besides, this clearly appears from what was said under the first particular. For that mysterious something in the divine nature, which lays a foundation for three persons in the one living and true God, lays an equal foundation for their absolute equality. It is as necessary that each person in the Trinity should be equal, as that each person should exist. For that which is the ground of their existence is the ground of their being absolutely equal in every divine perfection.

3. The scripture represents the three equally divine persons in the Trinity as acting in a certain order in the work of redemption. Though they are absolutely equal in *nature*, yet in *office* the first person is superior to the second, and the second is superior to the third. The Father holds the office of Creator, the Son the office of Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the office

of Sanctifier. The Father is represented as sending the Son, and the Son is represented as sending the Holy Ghost. The Son acts in subordination to the Father, and the Spirit acts in subordination to the Son and Father both. It is the dictate of wisdom, that where two or more persons act in concert, they should act in order. The three equally divine persons act in concert in the work of redemption; and for that reason they act in order, or in subordination one to another. And this superiority and inferiority of *office*, is the sole foundation of all that *nominal* inequality which the scripture represents as subsisting between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in carrying into effect their purposes of grace.

4. The scripture teaches us, that each of the divine persons takes his peculiar *name* from the peculiar *office* which he sustains in the economy of redemption. Each person has a peculiar name given to him in the text. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." The first person assumes the name of Father, because he is by office the Creator or Author of all things, and especially of the human nature of Christ. The second person assumes the name of Son and Word, by virtue of his incarnation, and mediatorial conduct. The angel who predicted his birth, intimated to his mother that he should be called the Son of God, on account of his incarnation. "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Christ is called the Word, in reference to his mediatorial conduct. His great business in this world was to unfold the divine purposes. Hence we read, in the first chapter of John, where he is repeatedly called the Word: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father, *he hath declared him.*" It is equally evident that the third person in the Trinity is called the Holy Ghost, on account of his peculiar office as Sanctifier. No other reason can be assigned for his having this peculiar name. He is not essentially more holy than the Father, or Son. But inasmuch as it is his peculiar office to apply the redemption procured by Christ, by renewing the hearts of sinners, and making them willing, in the day of his power, to embrace the offers of mercy, he may be properly called the *Holy* Ghost.

The distinct office which each person in the sacred Trinity sustains in carrying on the work of redemption, lays a proper foundation for the distinct and peculiar name given to each in scripture. Nor can we derive these names from any other origin. Though there be a foundation in the nature of the Deity for a distinction of persons, yet we cannot conceive that

there is the same foundation in his nature for calling the first person Father, the second person Son, and the third person Holy Ghost. These names clearly appear to originate from the work of redemption, and probably were unknown in heaven until the purposes of grace were there revealed. It is certain, however, that they cannot be supposed to be derived from any original difference between the three persons in the Godhead, without destroying their equality, and of consequence their divinity. I may add,

5. The scripture represents these three divine persons as one God. This is the plain language of the text. "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and *these three are one.*" Our Lord clearly taught the union between himself and the Father. He asserted that he dwelt in the Father, and the Father in him. And he said in plain terms, "I and my Father are one." It appears from the light of nature that there is one God; and it appears from the light of divine revelation that there is but one. The Holy One of Israel declares: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no god. — Is there a god beside me? yea, there is no god: I know not any." If there be but one God, then it necessarily follows that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three *Gods*, but only three *persons* in one self-existent, independent, eternal Being. The three persons are not one person, but one God. Or the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three in respect to their personality, and but one in respect to their nature and essence. I now proceed to show,

II. That this scriptural account of the mysterious doctrine of the sacred Trinity is not repugnant to the dictates of sound reason. Those who disbelieve that God exists a Trinity in Unity, suppose that such a mode of existence is not only above reason, but contrary to its plainest dictates. They consider the doctrine of three persons in one God, not as a profound mystery, but as a gross absurdity. And it must be granted that any doctrine is absurd, and ought to be exploded, which is really contrary to the dictates of sound reason. The only wise God can no more require us to believe that which is absurd, than he can command us to do that which is sinful. If we can clearly perceive, therefore, that there is a real absurdity in the doctrine of the Trinity, we ought not to believe it. But perhaps, if we candidly attend to what may be said under this head of discourse, we shall be convinced that the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity is no absurdity, but a great and glorious mystery; which lays a broad and solid foundation upon which we may safely build our hopes of a blessed immortality. Here it may be proper to observe,

1. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in scripture, implies no contradiction. Any doctrine which necessarily involves a contradiction is repugnant to reason, and demonstrably false. For it is out of the power of the human mind to conceive that a real contradiction should be true. We cannot conceive that two and three are equal to ten, nor that ten and five are equal to twenty. We cannot conceive that a part should be equal to the whole, nor that a body should move east and west at the same time. As soon as these propositions are understood, they instantly appear to be plain contradictions. And did the doctrine of the Trinity, according to scripture, imply that three persons are one person, or that three Gods are one God, it would necessarily involve a plain contradiction. But the scripture speaks more consistently upon this subject. It asserts that there is but one God, and yet three divine persons. This only implies that three divine persons are one God; and who can perceive a contradiction in this representation of a Trinity in Unity? We find no difficulty in conceiving of three divine persons. It is just as easy to conceive of three divine persons, as of three human persons. No man, perhaps, ever found the least difficulty in conceiving of the Father as a distinct person from the Son, nor in conceiving of the Son as a distinct person from the Holy Ghost, nor in conceiving of the Holy Ghost as a distinct person from both the Father and Son. But the only difficulty in this case lies in conceiving these *three* persons to be but *one*. And it is evident that no man can conceive three divine persons to be one divine person, any more than he can conceive three angels to be but one angel. But it does not hence follow that no man can conceive that three divine persons should be but one divine Being. For, if we only suppose that being may signify something different from person in respect to Deity, then we can easily conceive that God should be but one Being, and yet exist in three persons. It is impossible, therefore, for the most discerning and penetrating mind to perceive a real contradiction in the scriptures representing the one living and true God, as existing in three distinct persons. There may be, for aught we know, an incomprehensible something in the one self-existent Being, which lays a proper foundation for his existing a Trinity in Unity.

2. If it implies no contradiction that the one living and true God should exist in three persons, then this mysterious mode of the divine existence is agreeable to the dictates of sound reason. We cannot suppose that the uncreated Being should exist in the same manner in which we and other created beings exist. And if he exists in a different manner from created be-

ings, then his mode of existence must necessarily be mysterious. As creatures, we must expect to remain for ever unacquainted with that mode of existence which is peculiar to the great Creator. To suppose that God does not exist in a manner absolutely mysterious to creatures, is virtually to deny his existence. And if his existing a Trinity in Unity does not involve a plain contradiction, then it amounts to no more than a profound mystery, which we might reasonably expect to find in his mode of existence, had the scripture been silent upon the subject. Though, perhaps, the bare unassisted power of reason would have never discovered that God exists in three persons, yet, since the scripture has revealed this great mystery in the divine existence, reason has nothing to object against it. Reason can see and acknowledge a mystery, though it cannot comprehend it. Hence the scripture doctrine, that the one living and true God exists in three persons, is as agreeable to the dictates of sound reason as any mystery can be, or as any other account of the mode of the divine existence could have been. If the scripture had given any true account of the mode of God's existence, that mode must have appeared to such finite, imperfect creatures as we are, truly mysterious or incomprehensible. And whoever now objects against the scripture account of the sacred Trinity, would have equally objected against any other account which God could have given of his peculiar mode of existence. I may add,

3. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in scripture, is no more repugnant to the dictates of sound reason, than many other doctrines which all christians believe concerning God. God is truly incomprehensible by creatures. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" All who believe the existence of the Deity must believe mysteries which no human understanding can fathom. Here permit me to mention several things respecting God, which are commonly believed, and which are as mysterious as his existing in three persons.

It is generally believed that God is a *self-existent* Being, or that there is no cause or ground of his existence out of himself. But who can explain this mode of existence, or even form any clear conception of it? There must be some ground or foundation of God's existence; and to say that this is wholly within himself, is to say something of which we can frame no clear or distinct idea. It is only saying that the ground of God's existence is mysterious. And is it not as repugnant to the dictates of sound reason to say that the ground of God's existence is mysterious, as to say that the ground of his existing in three persons is mysterious? These two cases are exactly parallel.

There is a certain something in the Divine Being which renders his existence absolutely necessary. This all must believe, who believe that God exists. And so there is a certain something in the Divine Being, which renders it equally necessary that he should exist in three persons. It is therefore easy to see that there is nothing more repugnant to right reason in the doctrine of the Trinity, than in the doctrine of God's self-existence. Again,

It is generally believed that God is constantly present in all places, or that his presence perpetually fills the whole created universe. But can we frame any clear ideas of this universal presence of the Deity. It seems to be repugnant to reason to suppose that his presence is *extended*, because extension appears to be incompatible with the nature of a pure spirit. And if his presence be not extended, it is impossible for us to conceive how it should reach and fill all places at all times. The moment we attentively consider the universal presence of the Supreme Being, we are involved in a mystery as profound as that of three persons in one God. Once more,

It is generally believed that God is the Creator, who has made all things out of nothing. But it was a maxim with the ancient atheistical philosophers, that it is a contradiction to say that God made all things out of nothing; that is, without any preëxistent materials. And it is supposed by many who have had more light upon this subject, that creation is no more than an emanation of the Deity, or that God only diffuses his own existence in giving existence to other beings. Indeed, a strict and proper creation of all things out of nothing has appeared to many great and learned men as *contrary* to every dictate of reason. They have considered it not merely as a difficulty, or mystery, but as a real absurdity. And whoever will critically attend to the subject, will probably find it as difficult to reconcile the doctrine of a strict and proper creation to the dictates of his own reason, as the doctrine of three persons in one God. That a fountain should be diffused into streams, or the whole be divided into parts, it is easy to conceive; but these similitudes do not touch the case of a strict and proper creation. For in creation, God does not diffuse himself, since created objects are no part of the Deity; nor does he divide himself, since the Creator is not capable of a division into a multiplicity of parts. God neither made the world of preëxistent materials, nor of himself; but he made it out of nothing; that is, gave it a proper and real existence, distinct from his own. Creation is the effect of nothing but mere *power*. But of that power which is able to create, or produce something out of nothing, we can form no manner of conception. This attribute of the Deity,

therefore, is as really mysterious and incomprehensible in its operation, as the doctrine of the Trinity. Or it is a mystery that looks as much like an absurdity, as that of God's existing in three persons. There is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in this discourse, which is more repugnant to the dictates of sound reason, than the doctrine of a strict and proper creation, the doctrine of the divine omnipresence, or even the doctrine of the divine existence. And we must be extremely inconsistent, if we believe the being and works of the great Creator, and at the same time disbelieve that he exists, one God in three persons, according to the general representation of the sacred scriptures.

I shall now close the subject with a few brief remarks.

1. If the doctrine of the sacred Trinity has been properly stated in this discourse, then there seems to be no just foundation for the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son, and of the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost. Many have supposed that the Son, the second person in the Trinity, is, in some mysterious manner, begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Trinity, is, in the same mysterious manner, eternally proceeding from the Father and Son both. They found this opinion upon several passages of scripture, which I have not time to consider; but without a particular consideration of them, we may safely conclude that they do not contain sentiments so plainly contrary to our clearest apprehensions. To suppose that the Son, with respect to his divine nature, was begotten of the Father, and that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the concurrence of the Father and Son, is to suppose that a Trinity of persons is not founded in the divine nature, but merely in the divine will. For, on this supposition, if the Father had not pleased to beget the Son, and the Father and Son had not pleased to produce the Holy Ghost, there could have been no Trinity of persons in the Godhead. Besides, this opinion sets the Son as far below the Father, as a creature is below the Creator; and sets the Holy Ghost as far below the Son as he is below the Father; or rather it makes the Holy Ghost a creature of a creature! There are no ideas which we can affix to the words, beget, produce, or proceed, but must involve in them an infinite inequality between the three sacred persons in the adorable Trinity. On this ground, we feel constrained to reject the eternal generation of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost, as such mysteries as cannot be distinguished from real absurdities, and as such doctrines as strike at the foundation of the true doctrine of three equally divine persons in one God.

2. The doctrine of the sacred Trinity, as represented in scrip-

ture, gives us a clear and striking view of the all-sufficiency of God. Since he exists in three equally divine persons, there is a permanent foundation in his own nature, for the most pure and perfect blessedness. Society is the source of the highest felicity. And that society affords the greatest enjoyment, which is composed of persons of the same character, of the same disposition, of the same designs, and of the same pursuits. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are three equally divine persons in the one living and true God, are perfectly united in all these respects; and therefore God's existing a Trinity in Unity, necessarily renders him the all-sufficient source of his own most perfect felicity. We cannot conceive of any other mode of existence so absolutely perfect and blessed. Besides, this most perfect and blessed mode of God's existence lays the only possible foundation of the happiness of his sinful and perishing creatures. If the God whom we have offended had not existed a Trinity in Unity, we cannot conceive how he could have formed and executed the present plan of our redemption. Had there been but one person in the Deity, there could have been no mediator between God and men. But as God existed in three persons, the Father was able to send his Son to redeem us, and his Spirit to sanctify us, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence we are naturally led to see and admire the all-sufficiency of God, which ultimately results from his existing in three equally divine and glorious persons.

3. What has been said in this discourse may show us the importance of understanding and believing the scripture doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Unless we understand and believe this great and mysterious doctrine, it will be extremely difficult to answer the objections of the deists against the Bible, which plainly represents the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as three equally divine persons, and yet asserts there is but one God. And this doctrine is so interwoven with the whole scheme of the gospel, that we cannot possibly explain the great work of redemption in a clear and consistent manner, without admitting the personal characters and offices of the three divine persons in the sacred Trinity. This is evident from the peculiar phraseology of scripture, and no less evident from observation. All who have rejected the mystery of the Trinity from the Bible, have shaken, if not destroyed, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The gospel is so absolutely and obviously founded on the doctrine of three persons in one God, that whoever denies this great and fundamental truth must, in order to be consistent, deny all the peculiarities which distinguish revealed from natural religion. And if this be true, every friend of

divine revelation must feel the importance of understanding, believing and maintaining this first principle of his religion.

4. The joint operations of the ever blessed Trinity lay a foundation for the most perfect and blessed union among all holy beings. Each divine person bears a distinct part in the work of redemption, and each will be infinitely well pleased with the conduct of each. They will mutually rejoice in the great good which will be the fruit of their united exertions. And saints and angels will join in their communion. There will be the same kind of holy union and communion between saints and angels and the three divine persons in the sacred Trinity, that there will be between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And such a union and communion between all the inhabitants of heaven will afford the most consummate felicity. This glorious hope and prospect Christ exhibited before his sorrowful disciples, just before he left them, and ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. His words are memorable; and O that they might be written on the heart of every one of his followers as with the point of a diamond, and become a perpetual source of divine consolation and support! "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:—that they may be one, even as we are one:—I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Amen.

SERMON VIII.

A PERSONAL DISTINCTION IN THE GODHEAD.

THE grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. — 2 COR. xiii. 14.

THIS apostolic benediction has been more constantly and universally used by christians in their public worship, than any other passage in the New Testament, for nearly two thousand years. And they have used it, not to express their belief that there are three Gods, but that there are three distinct divine persons in the one living and true God. This common practice of christians is a presumptive evidence of their common belief of the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, and of its practical importance to promote true devotion and vital piety. Admitting this to be true, there is no occasion, perhaps, on which it is more proper to illustrate the truth and importance of this doctrine, than on a day of communion at the table of Christ, when his cordial friends unite to celebrate the memorials of his death. In treating upon this mysterious doctrine in the present occasional discourse, I shall not attempt to discuss it fully, but only endeavor to set it in a plain, scriptural, useful light. Accordingly I propose, agreeably to the language of the text, to show,

I. That there is not merely a nominal, but a personal distinction in the one living and true God; and,

II. That christians ought to exercise affections towards God, corresponding to this personal distinction in the divine essence.

I. I am to show that there is not merely a nominal, but a personal distinction in the Godhead.

Though all denominations of christians profess to believe that there is one only living and true God, yet they do not all

profess to believe that he exists a Trinity in Unity; or that there is something in his essence which lays a foundation for three equally distinct and divine persons. The Sabellians suppose that God is one person acting in three distinct offices, and for that reason is called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which is only a *nominal* distinction of persons. The Arians suppose that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct persons, but that the Son derives his existence from the Father, and the Holy Ghost derives his existence from the Father and the Son. And the Socinians, who are more appropriately called Unitarians, suppose that God exists in but one person; and that the Son is a mere man, and the Holy Ghost is no person at all, but a mere divine energy, or influence. Those, therefore, who are called Trinitarians are the only denomination of christians who profess to believe that there is a real, and not merely a nominal, distinction in the divine essence; and that there are three equally distinct and divine persons in the Godhead, who, on account of the different parts they act in the work of redemption, are called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But though these three divine persons are distinct, yet they are not separate. Things may be distinct, which are not separate. The soul and body of a living man are distinct, but not separate. The powers and faculties of the human mind are distinct, but not separate. So the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct persons in the Godhead, but not separate, because they are inseparably united in the divine essence. And in this union of three distinct persons in the one living and true God, consists the mystery of the sacred Trinity. It is universally acknowledged by those who maintain this doctrine, that it is a profound mystery, which cannot be explained. But though we cannot explain how three distinct persons exist in the Godhead, yet we can state the scripture evidence that there is a real personal distinction in the divine essence, and explain what the scripture reveals concerning the agency of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the work of redemption; which is all that is necessary and useful for us to know about this great and incomprehensible doctrine.

Now this doctrine, in the sense which has been mentioned, is implicitly or expressly taught both in the Old and New Testaments. But like many other important truths, it is more clearly taught by Christ and the apostles in the New Testament, than by the inspired writers in the Old Testament. I shall therefore confine myself in this discourse to what we find said in the New Testament, concerning the real personal distinction in the Godhead. Our Saviour just before his ascension into heaven, came to his apostles and said, "Go ye and teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here Christ distinguishes himself from the Father and the Holy Ghost, whom he represents as two distinct and equally divine persons, in whose names the divine ordinance of baptism is to be administered, to the end of time. I will now read to you what the apostles either implicitly or explicitly say concerning the personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the beginning and end of their epistles. The apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, begins thus: "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God — concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name; among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ; to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In this passage, the apostle represents Christ as the Son of God and the Son of David; or as both a divine and human person, and a distinct person from God the Father. And he closes his epistle with these words: "To God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever." Who can doubt whether he meant to distinguish the person of the Father from the person of Christ? His salutation in his first epistle to the Corinthians, runs in similar language. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ — unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord — Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Here he plainly expresses the personal distinction between the Father and the Son. And the conclusion of his epistle implies the same distinction, when he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." His second epistle begins in this form: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And he closes his epistle in the words of our text: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." In this short sentence, he expressly mentions each distinct person in the Trinity, by his appropriate name. To the Galatians he writes in his usual strain. "Paul, an apostle, (not of

men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." In the conclusion he says in the spirit of the salutation, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." He is careful to use the same phraseology in his salutation to the Ephesians. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And he concludes his letter thus: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." The love of the Father is here distinguished from the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which implies that they are two distinct persons. At the beginning of his epistle to the Philippians, he says, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The end of this epistle corresponds with the beginning. "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. — The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The apostle begins his letter to the Colossians by saying, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ; — to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." He begins his first epistle to the Thessalonians, in the same manner: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ;" and closes it in these terms: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Amen." He begins and ends his second epistle, by saying, "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;" and, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." His salutation in his first epistle to Timothy, is: "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." And he addresses him in precisely the same style in his second epistle. "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." And he adds at the end: "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." In writing to Titus, he uses similar expressions in the beginning of his letter. "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour." Peter in his second general epistle to christians uses the same mode of salutation

that Paul so uniformly did. He says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Thus Peter in one epistle, and Paul in twelve epistles, wrote to the churches of Christ in the spirit and language of this doctrine, though not in so many words. They do not always mention God, and the Holy Ghost, the three persons in the Trinity; but they mention two persons distinctly; and all who allow that there are two, will acknowledge that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead. In the passages that have been cited, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are represented in a manner which plainly implies that each of them possesses personal properties; and in a vast many other places in the New Testament, their personal properties are expressly mentioned. The Father is said to send the Son; the Son is said to send the Spirit. The Father speaks of the Son, and the Son speaks of the Father. And the Father and the Son speak of the Holy Ghost. The Father is said to act of himself, the Son is said to act of himself, and the Holy Ghost is said to act of himself. These are plain representations of the personal properties of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We know, therefore, that they are three distinct persons. Their personality is plainly and intelligibly revealed; though their unity is not and cannot be revealed. I have dwelt the longer upon this point, because some, who allow that there is a real distinction in the divine nature which lays a foundation for God to exist, a Trinity in Unity, are unwilling to allow that he exists in three distinct persons; and because all that we can know or need to know about the mysterious mode of the divine existence, is the proper personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and not their unity. I now proceed to show,

II. That christians ought to exercise affections towards God corresponding to this personal distinction in his peculiar mode of existence. This seems to be the import of the apostle's benediction in the text. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." We are to understand this as a petition, rather than a precept. The apostle prays that the Corinthians might enjoy the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion, or rather communication of the Holy Ghost. He used the form of a petition for them in the seventh verse of the context. "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil." And his benediction, in the close of his first epistle to the Thessalonians, is a proper petition. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ." There is an ellipsis in the text which our translators have supplied with the word *be*; and which they might have supplied so as to have given it the very form of prayer. The apostle is to be understood as praying that the Corinthians might feel and express their peculiar obligations to each person in the Trinity, for what he had done for their salvation. And this they might and ought to do; because they knew that the Father was a distinct person from the Son, and the Son was a distinct person from the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct person from the Father and Son; and that each of these divine persons had done that for them which laid them under distinct obligations to himself. This is a duty which was not peculiar to the Corinthians, but is common to all christians at this day. They all ought to feel and express their peculiar obligations to each of the divine persons in the Godhead, for what he has done to save them.

In the first place, they ought gratefully to acknowledge their peculiar obligations to the Father, the first person in the Trinity, for his love to them in providing a Saviour for them. They know that it was he, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and that he "commended his love towards them, in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them." It was the love of the Father that sent the Son, and not the love of the Son that sent the Father, to die the just for the unjust. Christians are indebted to the love of the Father for forming the gracious design of redeeming them from sin and misery, and restoring them to perfect and perpetual holiness and happiness, at the infinite expense of the death of his Son. This great and distinguishing expression of the Father's love to them, lays them under distinct obligation to feel and express peculiar gratitude to him, as the prime mover and actor in promoting their eternal salvation.

In the second place, they ought gratefully to acknowledge the astonishing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person in the adorable Trinity, in what he has done to atone for their sins and open the door of mercy for them. He entered into the covenant of redemption with the Father, and engaged to perform the part of a mediator between him and his revolted subjects. And in his mediatorial office, he performed the most marvellous acts of condescension and grace. He left his Father's bosom, came into the world, took upon him human nature and the form of a servant, became a man of sorrows, and finally poured out his soul unto death on the cross, to make atonement for sin. He said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom

for many." It was inconsistent with the justice of God to pardon sinners without an atonement for sin; and therefore he set forth Christ "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins — that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth." Again we are told, "that without shedding of blood is no remission." Again we read, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." It was an act of astonishing grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, to make himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and open the only possible way for God to exercise pardoning mercy to penitent believers. Hence says the apostle to the Corinthians, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Christians are under the strongest and most endearing obligations to feel and express the warmest gratitude to Christ in particular, for what he has done and suffered, in his mediatorial character, to save them from the wrath to come and make them for ever happy.

In the third place, they ought gratefully to acknowledge their obligations to the Holy Ghost, who condescends to perform his official work, in preparing them for the kingdom of glory. They were once dead in trespasses and sins, and under the entire dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They must have pined away in their iniquities and perished for ever, notwithstanding the love of God in sending Christ to die for them, and notwithstanding the grace of Christ in dying to atone for their sins, unless the Holy Ghost had undertaken to enlighten their minds, awaken their consciences, and renew and sanctify their hearts, and make them willing in the day of his power, to accept of pardoning mercy through the atonement of Christ alone. They are indebted to the person of the Holy Ghost, for all the love, repentance, faith, submission and every other christian grace they have ever exercised. It belongs to him as Sanctifier, to communicate holiness to the hearts of those whom the Father has given to the Son. And it belongs to them who have received his gracious communications, to feel and express peculiar gratitude to him in particular.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If there be a real distinction in the divine nature which lays a foundation for God to exist in three equally divine persons, then we may see how it was morally possible for him to form and execute the plan of salvation. He could not have

consistently saved sinners without an atonement for sin; and an atonement for sin could not have been made, if there had been but one person in the Godhead. If the person of the Father had existed alone, without the Son and Holy Ghost, he could not have suffered and died for the sinful race of man; and, by consequence, he could not have formed any scheme for their redemption from that destruction, which he had threatened to the transgressors of his holy and righteous law. There could have been no Saviour, and consequently no salvation. This even the Unitarians do not deny, though they say that they do not know but that God could have devised some other way of saving sinners, or have saved them without an atonement. But it appears from the whole current of scripture, that God has formed a design to save them through an atonement. And since he exists a Trinity in Unity, it is easy to see how he could save them in this way. He could, if he saw it to be best, appoint his Son, the second person in his mysterious essence, to become incarnate, and suffer and die for those whose nature he took upon him. This was certainly possible; and therefore there is no presumptive evidence against the truth and divinity of the gospel, as infidels pretend. And now if we find, by examining the gospel, that it does reveal a way of salvation through the joint operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we are bound to believe and embrace it. There is nothing unreasonable or absurd in the Father's appointing the Son to give his life a ransom for many, and die the just for the unjust, that the Holy Ghost might renew and sanctify them, and bring them near to God. But, on the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable to believe, that if the Father designed to save sinners, he should "so love the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" for we can see no other possible way in which he could consistently save them. Hence,

2. We learn from what has been said, that if the gospel scheme of salvation could not have been formed without a personal distinction in the divine nature, then it cannot be understood, without understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine is the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, in the highest sense of fundamental: for the whole gospel is founded upon it, so that the denial of it subverts the whole gospel. Some who profess to believe the doctrine, hesitate to say that it is fundamental. But we presume that whoever can fairly refute the doctrine of the Trinity, can as fairly refute the truth and divinity of the gospel, and prove that it is not of divine inspiration. And this is confirmed by fact. Those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, generally deny all the peculiar and

important doctrines of the Bible; and the arguments they use against the doctrine of the Trinity are equally forcible against the inspiration of the scriptures. If there be one doctrine of the gospel more fundamental than another, it is the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Accordingly Trinitarians in general have believed and maintained it to be essential to Christianity.

3. If the doctrine of the Trinity has been scripturally and properly stated in this discourse, then it is a very intelligible doctrine, notwithstanding the mystery contained in it. The inspired writers clearly reveal the personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by describing their distinct offices, and the distinct parts they perform in the work of redemption. They represent the Father as superior to the Son, and the Son as superior to the Holy Ghost, in the order of their operations; and they represent each person as operating voluntarily and distinctly of himself, and performing distinct operations. When we read that the Father sends the Son, but the Son does not send the Father; that the Son sends the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost does not send the Son; that the Father did not die, but the Son did; and that the Holy Ghost did not die, but the Son did; we cannot but conceive that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinct persons. And we have as clear an idea of these three divine persons, as of three human persons. There is no mystery in the personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though there is a profound mystery in their being one God. But this has no tendency to prevent our understanding what the scripture reveals concerning their personality. The self-existence and eternity of the Deity is a mystery; but this does not prevent our seeing and believing the plain evidences of his existing of himself from eternity. It is a mystery how God created all things, governs all things, and fills all places at one and the same time; but this mystery does not prevent our believing and loving these great and precious truths. The scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, is as plain and as easy to be understood as any other doctrine of the Bible. God's works of creation and providence are as mysterious as his work of redemption, which he has revealed in his word. We are as much bound to believe what he has revealed in his word as what he has revealed of himself in the works of creation and providence. The book of divine revelation is as easy to be understood as the book of nature. And those who study the book of nature, find as many difficulties and mysteries as those who study the book of divine revelation.

4. It appears from what has been said concerning the scriptural account of the sacred Trinity, that those who disbelieve and deny the doctrine, ought not to be admitted into the church,

because they cannot consistently observe the two great ordinances of the gospel — baptism and the holy sacrament. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the three distinct persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and how can those who deny the divinity of the Son, and the personality of the Holy Ghost, come to this ordinance themselves, or administer it to others in sincerity, and without mockery or blasphemy? But this was, in the days of the apostles, an initiating ordinance into the church; and they admitted none into it before they submitted to baptism. And christian churches in general have continued to require all adults to be baptized, as an indispensable condition to their admission into their body, and to a participation of the holy sacrament. But it is still more inconsistent to admit those who deny the Trinity to the Lord's supper, than to baptism. For the sacrament was instituted for the very purpose of gratefully acknowledging the grace, the personality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how can those who disbelieve that he was the second person in the Godhead, and had only a human or angelic nature, pay public and divine homage to him in the sacrament? However amiable in their conduct, or however eminent for talents and learning Unitarians may be, they are not christians, and have no right to be admitted into christian churches. I know they complain bitterly of being denied the christian name and debarred from christian ordinances. But what reason have they to complain, when they are sentimentally and zealously opposed to the great doctrines and special ordinances of the gospel? Can real christians suffer the sacred ordinances of the gospel to be profaned, consistently with their love to God, and their solemn engagements to their divine Redeemer?

5. There was a propriety in Christ's appointing an ordinance, in which his friends may hold communion with him in particular. As he was the second person in the Trinity according to the economy of redemption, and the only person who took upon him human nature, and suffered and died in the room of sinners, so there was a peculiar propriety in his appointing an ordinance in which his friends may commemorate his death, and hold communion with him in particular. If there were not three persons in the Godhead, or if Christ were not a distinct person from the Father and Holy Ghost, there could be no foundation for his appointing an ordinance to commemorate his death, and for holding communion with him in distinction from the Father and Holy Ghost. But the apostle tells us that the sacrament of the supper was appointed for both these purposes. He says, "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given

thanks, he brake it and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come." In another place the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" If Christ be a divine person, distinct from the Father and Holy Ghost, then there is a propriety in his appointing the sacrament, and giving his friends a peculiar opportunity to commemorate his death, and hold communion with him in his body and blood, in his sufferings and death. He suffered and died, and not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost; his grace, therefore, is to be remembered and gratefully acknowledged, in distinction from the love of the Father and communication of the Holy Ghost; and with him his friends are to hold particular communion. Christ feels a peculiar affection towards his friends for whom he died, and takes peculiar pleasure in communing with them at his table. He says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." But who can do this who does not believe the blessed doctrine of the Trinity; and who does not feel peculiar love and gratitude to the personal character and conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ?

SERMON IX.

THE TRUE GOD IS TO BE WORSHIPPED AS EXISTING IN THREE PERSONS.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. — Eph. ii. 18.

God has revealed his will to mankind gradually, by one inspired teacher after another. And these teachers never represent any thing as new, which had been revealed before. Thus Moses takes it for a revealed and well-known truth that the Sabbath is to be sanctified, the first time he mentions that day. All the prophets after him speak of temporal death, human depravity, and a future state of happiness and misery, as things already revealed and universally believed. Our Saviour never pretends to teach any thing as new which had been taught before by any of the teachers sent from God. And it is very remarkable that neither Christ nor the apostles ever speak of the sacred Trinity as a new, but only as an old doctrine, which had been taught and believed under all the previous dispensations of the gospel. When Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, to be administered in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he gives no intimation that he meant to reveal any thing new, respecting these adorable persons in the Godhead. So the apostles, in their familiar letters to the churches, occasionally speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as though it were a doctrine well known and universally believed by common christians, that the one true God exists in three equally divine persons. This remark is supported by the phraseology in the text. Speaking of the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles as being taken away by the gospel, the apostle says, in the most familiar manner, "Through him

(Christ) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here the apostle plainly supposes that the christians to whom he wrote were well acquainted with the great and practical doctrine of the Trinity, and in their most solemn devotions exercised distinct and peculiar affections towards each distinct person in the Godhead. Now this familiar manner in which Christ and the apostles speak of the doctrine of the Trinity is a strong presumptive evidence that it was not a new doctrine in their day, but a doctrine which had been revealed and believed ever since the first promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. If it were ever proper for guilty creatures in this world to present their prayers and praises to the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit, it was proper before the law, under the law, and under the gospel. Hence we may justly conclude,

That we ought to address and worship the one true God, as existing in three persons.

As it is the only design of the present discourse to set this subject in a plain and practical light, I shall proceed to illustrate it in the following method:

I. Show that there is but one true God.

II. That the one true God exists in three persons.

III. Why we ought to address and worship the one true God, according to this personal distinction in the divine nature.

I. We are to consider the unity of the Deity.

It is much easier to prove from the light of nature that there is one God, than to prove the impossibility of there being any more than one. Though some plausible arguments in favor of the unity of the Deity may be drawn from the beauty, order and harmony apparent in the creatures and objects around us, and from the nature of a self-existent, independent and perfect Being, yet these arguments fall far short of full proof or strict demonstration. To obtain complete and satisfactory evidence that there is but one living and true God, we must have resort to the scriptures of truth, in which the divine unity is clearly and fully revealed. God has always been extremely jealous of his unity, which has been so often disbelieved and denied in this rebellious and idolatrous world. He has never condescended to give his glory to another, nor his praise to false and inferior deities. He said, in the first of his commands to his own people, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." After this, he directed Moses to go and say, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." These precepts and prohibitions soon lost their restraining influence upon a people prone to backsliding; which gave occasion for more frequent and solemn declarations of the divine unity and supremacy, by succeeding

prophets. Isaiah is directed to say, "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no god." "Is there any god besides me? yea, there is no god: I know not any." "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." In these passages, the God of Israel asserts his unity, not only in opposition to the heathen in general, who supposed there were many gods, but more especially against the Manicheans, who supposed there were two eternal, self-existent beings, the one the author of all good, and the other the author of all evil. And taking these texts in this sense, they prove not only that the God of Israel is the greatest of all that have been supposed to be gods, but that he is the only true God, exclusively of all other beings in the universe. Our Saviour taught the unity of God as plainly and expressly as the prophets. When a certain man came and said unto him, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" he demanded, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." At another time he said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And when the unity of the Deity was implicitly called in question by Satan, who tempted him to worship him, he repelled and silenced him by saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The apostle Paul also asserts the unity of God in the most plain and unequivocal terms. "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one." "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one." "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Thus the inspired writers unitedly and expressly assert, that there is but one living and true God, who possesses self-existence, independence, and every other divine perfection. But yet,

II. The one living and true God exists in three distinct persons.

It is generally supposed that the inspired writers of the Old Testament give some plain intimations of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Moses, in speaking of God, very often used

the plural number, when the idiom of the language allowed him to use the same word, or some other, in the singular number; which is a presumptive evidence that he meant to intimate a personal distinction in the divine nature. And this supposition is strengthened, by his representing God himself as speaking in the same manner on different occasions. He tells us that when God was about to create man, he said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And again, that when he was about to confound the language of the builders of Babel, he said, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Moses often mentions "the angel of the Lord," who appeared to the ancient patriarchs in the figure of a man, but spake the language of God. This was undoubtedly Christ, the second person in the Trinity, whom the apostle says had been in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Job seems to have been acquainted with the plurality of persons in the Deity, and to have built his hopes of salvation upon the atonement of the second. "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." David clearly understood the doctrine of the Trinity, and frequently refers to each person, in the book of Psalms. He says to God, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And again he says, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" He once and again mentions both the Father and Son together. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This refers to the promise of the Father to the Son, in the second Psalm. "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." These predictions respected each person in the Trinity, as the apostle Peter tells us in the second chapter of Acts. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into

the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." After this, Peter farther says, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." It plainly appears from this passage that all the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ understood the doctrine of the Trinity, and the different parts which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were to act, in carrying into execution the gracious scheme of redemption. And just so far as the people of God understood the predictions of their prophets, respecting the Messiah, they too must have known and believed the plurality of persons in the Deity.

But we find this, like many other great and important doctrines, more clearly revealed by Christ and the apostles, than it had been before by the prophets. Christ said a great deal about the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He commanded his apostles and their successors in the ministry to baptize visible believers in the name of this sacred Trinity. He promised to send the Holy Ghost, to comfort his disciples, and to convince and convert sinners. And he neglected no proper opportunity of teaching his hearers that he, his Father, and the Holy Spirit, were three equally divine persons, united in one God. After his death, his apostles strenuously maintained and propagated the same doctrine. The apostle John wrote his gospel with a principal view to maintain the divinity and equality of each person in the Trinity. And in his first epistle he expressly says, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." The apostle Paul begins and ends all his epistles in the very spirit and language of the Trinity. It may suffice to mention one instance, at the close of his second epistle to the Corinthians. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." These few passages of Scripture plainly show that God has revealed himself to his people, in every age of the church, as existing in three persons.

III. This leads us to inquire why we ought to address and worship the one true God, according to this personal distinction in the divine nature.

1. The first reason which occurs is, because we ought, in our religious devotions, to acknowledge every thing in God which belongs to his essential glory. Much of his essential glory consists in his existing a Trinity in Unity, which is a mode of existence infinitely superior to that of any other beings in the universe. Though there is a wide difference in the

powers and capacities, as well as moral characters of intelligent creatures, yet we know of no difference in their mode of existence. Among the vast variety of created natures, no individual has ever been known who existed in a plurality of persons. This mode of existence is peculiar to the one only living and true God, and constitutes one of the essential perfections of his nature. We ought, therefore, to acknowledge this as well as any other divine attribute, in our addresses to the Deity. It is the great design of religious worship to give unto God all the honor and glory which are due unto his name. There is precisely the same reason why we should address our Maker as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in three persons, as why we should address him as the first, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings.

2. We ought to address and worship God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because we are deeply indebted to each person in the Godhead, for the office he sustains and the part he performs in the great work of redemption. The Father is by nature God, and by office the Creator, Lawgiver, Governor and Judge of the world. It is the Father in his official character who formed the gospel scheme of salvation; who appointed Christ to be the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier of mankind; who created all things according to his eternal purpose in Christ Jesus; who gave the prohibition to Adam, and the law to Israel; who governed the world from Adam to Christ, and who will judge the world at the last day. Though any or all of these works may be ascribed to the Son and Spirit, yet they cannot be properly ascribed to either, in the same sense in which they are to be ascribed to the Father. Neither the Son nor the Spirit ever work officially with the Father, nor the Father officially with the Son or Spirit. It is the peculiar and exclusive office of the Father to foreordain all things, to create all things, to govern all things, and to give law and judgment to the whole intelligent creation. The Son is by nature God, and by office the Redeemer, Mediator or Saviour of the world. In this office he has acted, and still acts, in subordination to the Father. According to his eternal appointment, he became personally united with human nature, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make complete atonement for all mankind; and he now lives to intercede for the elect, and to overrule all things for their benefit. The Holy Ghost is by nature God, and by office the Sanctifier and Comforter of the heirs of salvation. In this office he acts in subordination to the Son as well as to the Father, and applies the atonement of Christ to those who were ordained to eternal life. He awakens

their consciences, renews their hearts, and carries on a work of grace within them, until he has made them meet for the kingdom of glory. Thus each person in the Godhead has laid us under distinct and peculiar obligations to himself for what he has done to promote our salvation. We are indebted to the Father for bringing us into existence and sending his Son to die for us. We are indebted to the Son for his condescension and grace in redeeming us to God by his blood. And we are indebted to the Holy Ghost for all he has done to form us vessels of mercy. This is a good reason why we should acknowledge and worship God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and exercise those affections which are correspondent to the obligations we are under to each of these divine persons. Though we cannot form a clear and comprehensive idea of their unity, yet we can form a clear and distinct idea of their personality and agency; which is all we need to know, in order to give each the glory which is due to his name.

3. We ought to address and worship the true God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because this is necessarily implied in holding communion with him. It is owing to God's existing a Trinity in Unity, that he can hold the most perfect and blessed communion with himself. And it is owing to the same personal distinction in the divine nature, that christians can hold communion with each and all the persons in the Godhead. The inspired writers represent true believers as holding communion sometimes with the Father, sometimes with the Son, and sometimes with the Holy Ghost. Christ prayed that all his followers might enjoy the same union and communion with him, which he enjoyed with the Father. The apostle John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul tells christians that "God is faithful, by whom they were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." And again he says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Christians may hold communion with the love of the Father in sending his Son, with the love of the Son in suffering on the cross, and with the love of the Holy Ghost in sanctifying their hearts. But they cannot hold communion with the Holy Ghost in sending the Son, for he did not send him; nor with the Father in suffering on the cross, for he never did suffer on the cross. This shows that when christians hold communion with God, they hold communion with each person in the Godhead distinctly. Their communion with the Father is not their communion with the Son, and their communion with the Son is not their communion with the Father, and their communion

with the Spirit is not their communion with either the Father or Son. They hold distinct communion with each person in the sacred Trinity. It is, therefore, the belief and love of this doctrine, which lays the foundation for that holy and intimate communion with God, which will be the source of their highest enjoyment, both in time and eternity.

4. We are not only allowed, but constrained, to address and worship the true God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, because there is no other way in which we can find access to the throne of divine grace. This important idea is plainly contained in the text. "For through him," that is, Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Our Saviour expresses the same sentiment in stronger terms. "Jesus saith, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The apostle represents believers as enjoying pardon, peace, and access to God, through Christ alone. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." As it was Christ who made atonement for sin, so it is only through him that we can have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Sinful creatures cannot approach to the Father in the same way that innocent creatures can. The holy angels can approach to the Father directly, without the mediation or intercession of Christ. But we must approach unto the Father in that new and living way which Christ has consecrated for us through his atoning blood. Indeed, according to the economy of redemption, we can have nothing to do with God, our offended Sovereign, only as existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is only through Christ that we have liberty of access unto the Father, and may come boldly unto the throne of grace for pardoning mercy. This renders it not only proper, but indispensable, that we should address and worship God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature. For it is only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our mediator and intercessor, that the Father can consistently hear our prayers, accept our persons, and make us for ever happy in the enjoyment of heaven.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This discourse teaches us that the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the essential and most important articles of Christianity. It is universally allowed that some doctrines of the gospel are more important than others; but it is not so universally allowed that the doctrine of the Trinity is a primary article of faith. Some deny the importance of this doctrine from one

motive, and some from another. Some who really disbelieve the doctrine, choose to conceal their disbelief by only calling its importance in question. Some who doubt whether the doctrine be true, are very willing to speak of it as a dark and unimportant point. And among those who profess to believe the truth of the doctrine, there are some who, for the sake of holding communion with the doubting and disbelieving, are disposed to discard it from the catalogue of the essentials and fundamentals of Christianity. But it is extremely absurd for any who admit the truth, to deny the importance of the doctrine of the sacred Trinity. A more plain, or a more important, or a more practical doctrine, cannot be found in the whole volume of inspiration. It is as easy to conceive of three divine persons, as to conceive of one divine person; the only difficulty is to conceive how three divine persons should be but one divine Being. But this is the mystery of the doctrine which it is neither possible nor necessary for us to understand. It is enough for us to believe that there are three equally divine persons in the Godhead, and to feel and conduct towards each person according to his divine nature and peculiar office. This the man of the meanest capacity, as well as the most learned and acute divine, may and ought to do, because the doctrine of the Trinity is as plainly revealed in scripture, as any other divine mystery. No man can seriously and impartially read the Bible, whether he believes it to be of divine inspiration or not, without finding the doctrine of the Trinity there. It is true, this, like several other important doctrines, is more clearly revealed in the New Testament than in the Old; but it is so clearly revealed in both, that it cannot be denied, or explained away, without shaking the foundation of the gospel. For the whole scheme of redemption was not only devised and adopted by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but each person engaged to bear a distinct part in carrying it into execution. If there be, therefore, any one doctrine of the gospel which may be properly called fundamental, the docrine of the Trinity may be properly called so, because the whole gospel is built upon it. Accordingly we find that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, do eqnally deny the doctrine of the atonement, and every other peculiar and important doctrine of Christianity, and bring it down to a level with mere natural religion. The doctrine of the Trinity is so fundamental to the gospel, that it cannot be denied or subverted, without denying or subverting the whole gospel.

Nor is it less necessary and important in a practical, than in a speculative view. All religious worship, true devotion, or vital piety, depends upon it. No prayers nor praises of ours can find acceptance with the Father unless they flow from the

influence of the Spirit, and are offered in the name of the Son. We may as well hope to worship God in a right and acceptable manner, without believing and loving the gospel, as without believing and loving the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. It is only in the belief and love of this great and fundamental truth, that we can so worship and glorify God as to enjoy him for ever. We ought, therefore, to hold the doctrine of the adorable Trinity in high estimation, and endeavor to transmit it pure and uncorrupt to the latest generations. In this light orthodox christians in every age of the church have considered it, and never failed to give it a place in all their public creeds, or confessions of faith. And though there have been divers sects who have partially or totally denied the doctrine, yet the great body of the most pure and pious christians have, from the apostles' days to the present time, treated and defended it as one of the first principles of the oracles of God; and generally denied christian communion and fellowship to those who have openly embraced either the Arian, Socinian, Sabellian, or Unitarian error.

2. It appears from what has been said, that we ought to regard and acknowledge the Father as the head of the sacred Trinity, and the primary object of religious homage. Though all the three persons in the Godhead are equal in every divine perfection, yet they are not equal in respect to the order and the office which they severally sustain in the work of redemption. The Father is the first in order, and the supreme in office; and for this cause, we ought to present our prayers and praises more immediately and directly to him, than to either of the other persons in the Godhead. This is plainly intimated in the text. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." We often read of Christ's praying unto the Father, but never read of the Father's praying unto Christ. He taught his disciples to pray in the same form in which he prayed, and to say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and to ask the Father in his name, for every thing they wanted. And how often did the apostles offer up their devout and fervent prayers for others, to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" This common mode of expression in their addresses to the throne of grace plainly implies that they meant to acknowledge the Father, as the primary or supreme object of adoration. Though the heavenly hosts pay divine homage to the Son of God, yet they more immediately and directly address the Father in their most solemn and grateful devotions. They say, "blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." These examples of Christ, of the apostles, and of the

heavenly hosts, not only warrant, but require christians to address their prayers and praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the primary object of divine homage and adoration. But,

3. Since God exists in three equally divine persons, there appears to be good ground to pay divine homage to each person distinctly. Though the Father is most generally to be distinctly and directly addressed, yet sometimes there may be a great propriety in addressing the Son and Spirit according to their distinct ranks and offices. Christ said, the Father would "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Accordingly, Christ never rejected nor condemned the divine homage which was repeatedly paid to him both before and after his resurrection. Stephen, we know, with his dying breath prayed and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This, if there were no other instance of the kind recorded in scripture, would warrant us to pray distinctly and directly to Christ as well as to the Father. It is true we have no precept nor example for paying distinct and direct homage to the Holy Ghost; but his divine nature and office evidently render him a proper object of religious worship, and both justify and encourage us to pray immediately and distinctly to him for his sanctifying, guiding and comforting influences. There appears to be the same reason for praying to our Sanctifier for grace, as to our Redeemer for pardon. And this has been the general opinion of orthodox christians, who have from age to age had their doxologies, in which they have paid distinct and equal adoration and praise to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

4. If we ought to acknowledge and worship the true God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature, then we ought to obey him according to the same distinction. We find some commands given by the Father, some by the Son, and some by the Holy Ghost. Though we are equally bound to obey each of these divine persons, in point of authority, yet we ought to obey each from distinct motives, arising from the distinct relations they bear to us, and the distinct things they have done for us. We ought to obey the Father as our Creator, the Son as our Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. This distinction is as easy to be perceived and felt, as the distinction between creating goodness, redeeming mercy and sanctifying grace. Every true believer will feel constrained from a sense of gratitude, to distinguish the commands of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and to pay a cheerful obedience to the commands of each person, from the most endearing motives. Christ expected his friends would obey *his* commands from a sense of his kindness, as well as of his authority. "If ye love me keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do

whatsoever I command you." "If a man love me, he will keep my words." The apostle and the primitive christians felt the constraining influence of gratitude, to live a life of obedience to him who suffered and died for them. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." If the love of Christ be a distinct reason for obeying his commands, then the love of the Father is a distinct reason for obeying his commands, and the love of the Spirit is a distinct reason for obeying his precepts and prohibitions. Thus a cordial belief of the glorious doctrine of the Trinity cannot fail of having a powerful and happy influence upon every branch of the christian life, as well as every act of christian piety and devotion.

It now concerns the professors of religion to inquire whether they are real or only nominal christians. The doctrine we have been considering is a proper criterion, to determine this serious and interesting question. If those who bear the christian name will bring themselves to this standard, it is more than possible that many at this day may find that they have no good ground to hope that they are real christians. Have any a right to entertain this hope who do not acknowledge and worship the only true God as he has revealed himself in the gospel? Has he not there revealed himself as the only living and true God, existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Do either the Arians, or Socinians, or Sabellians, or Unitarians, acknowledge and worship God as existing a Trinity of persons in a unity of essence? Do they honor the Son, or the Spirit, as they honor the Father? Is there any essential difference between their religious homage, and the religious homage of deists or pagans? They all perfectly agree in the sole object of their supreme worship, and may they not all be equally sincere in their religious devotions? But do any of them acknowledge and worship the only true God according to the personal distinction in the divine nature? Do any of them approach the Father through the Son, and by the Spirit? Is there the least trait of christianity in their religious worship? And can such infidel and pagan services meet the divine approbation? If the doctrine of the adorable Trinity be true, it must lie at the foundation of christianity, both in theory and practice, and brand as anti-christian all those who refuse to worship God in the belief and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is hard to conceive how any man can persuade himself that he is a real christian, who has never had any communion with the sacred Trinity, and who has always, in his religious devotions, symbolized with pagans and infidels.

PART IV.

THE STANDARD OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

SERMONS X.—XIII.

SERMON X.

AN ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIRTUE AND VICE IN THE NATURE OF THINGS.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! — Isaiah v. 20.

It appears from the preceding context, that God has used a great variety of means to cultivate the minds of his people, and prepare them to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. But all the means which he has used with them were unhappily lost upon them. Instead of bringing forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. Instead of growing better under divine cultivation, they waxed worse and worse, until they presumed to justify themselves by denying the distinction between virtue and vice. For this presumption, God denounces a heavy wo against them in our text. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." The propriety of this threatening is founded in the essential and immutable difference between right and wrong, good and evil. Were there no such distinction in the nature of things between virtue and vice, there could be no real harm in calling good evil, and evil good; nor even in denying the existence of both. But if there be a foundation in the nature of things for a moral distinction in the actions of moral agents, then God may justly threaten and punish those who deny the criminality of their own sinful conduct, by denying the immutable distinction between virtue and vice. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, I shall endeavor to make it appear that there is in the nature of things an essential difference between virtue and vice.

I shall first explain the meaning, and then confirm the truth, of this observation.

Every thing has a nature which is peculiar to itself, and which is essential to its very existence. Light has a nature by which it is distinguished from darkness. Sweet has a nature by which it is distinguished from bitter. Animals have a nature by which they are distinguished from men. Men have a nature by which they are distinguished from angels. Angels have a nature by which they are distinguished from God. And God has a nature by which he is distinguished from all other beings. Now such different natures lay a foundation for different obligations; and different obligations lay a foundation for virtue and vice in all their different degrees. As virtue and vice, therefore, take their origin from the nature of things, so the difference between moral good and moral evil is as immutable as the nature of things from which it results. It is as impossible in the nature of things that the essential distinction between virtue and vice should cease, as that the essential distinction between light and darkness, bitter and sweet, should cease. These distinctions do not depend upon the mere will of the Deity; for so long as he continues the nature of things, no law or command of his can change light into darkness, bitter into sweet, or virtue into vice. And this is what we mean by the assertion that virtue and vice are essentially different in the nature of things. Having fixed the meaning, I proceed to show the truth of this assertion. And the truth of it will appear, if we consider,

1. That the essential difference between virtue and vice may be known by those who are wholly ignorant of God. The barbarians, who saw the viper on Paul's hand, knew the nature and ill-desert of murder. The pagans, who were in the ship with Jonah, knew the difference between natural and moral evil, and considered the former as a proper and just punishment of the latter. The natives of this country know the nature and obligation of promises and mutual contracts, as well as our wisest politicians, who form national treaties and compacts with them. And even little children know the nature of virtue and vice, and are able to perceive the essential difference between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, kindness and unkindness, obedience and disobedience, as well as their parents, or any other persons who are acquainted with God and the revelation of his will. But how would children and heathens discover the essential difference between moral good and evil, if this difference were not founded in the nature of things? They are totally ignorant of God, and of consequence totally ignorant of his revealed will. It is impossible, therefore, that they

should know that any thing is either right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, because God has either required or forbidden it. But if the essential difference between right and wrong results from the nature of things, then those who are entirely unacquainted with God and his laws may be able to discover it. Heathens, on this supposition, may know that murder is a crime, though they never knew God nor heard of the sixth commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not kill." And children, who know no difference between the Bible and other books in respect to divine authority, may know the criminality of lying and stealing, and feel their moral obligations to refrain from these and other moral evils. Accordingly we find that both those who never heard of the Bible, and those who never read it, are as capable of discerning the difference between moral good and evil, as those who make it their business to study and explain the sacred oracles. And this is a clear evidence that the essential difference between virtue and vice results, not from the will of God, but from the nature of things.

2. Men are capable of judging what is right or wrong in respect to the divine character and conduct. This God implicitly allows, by appealing to their own judgment, whether he has not treated them according to perfect rectitude. In the context, he solemnly calls upon his people to judge of the propriety and benignity of his conduct towards them. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" He makes a similar appeal to the same people, by the prophet Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" He says by the prophet Ezekiel, "Hear now, O house of Israel; is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" And he repeats the question, to give it a greater emphasis. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" By the prophet Micah, he appeals not only to Israel, but to all the world, whether he had not treated them with the greatest propriety and tenderness. "Hear now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I

sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." In these solemn appeals to the consciences of men, God does not require them to believe that his character is good because it is *his* character; nor that his laws are good because they are *his* laws; nor that his conduct is good because it is *his* conduct. But he allows them to judge of his character, his laws and his conduct, according to the immutable difference between right and wrong, in the nature of things; which is the infallible rule, by which to judge of the moral conduct of all moral beings. In every instance, therefore, in which God refers his conduct to the judgment of men, he gives the strongest attestation to the immutable difference between right and wrong in the nature of things.

3. God cannot destroy this difference without destroying the nature of things. If he should make a law on purpose to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice, it would have no tendency to destroy it. Or if he should make a law which should forbid us to love him with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves, it would not destroy the obligation of his first and great command. As no positive precepts can destroy the nature of things, so no positive precepts can destroy our obligations to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong. While God remains what he is, it will be our duty to obey him, and not his duty to obey us. While we remain what we are, it will be our duty to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. And while all moral beings remain what they are, it will be criminal in them to exercise cruelty, injustice or malevolence towards one another. Hence it is evident that even Omnipotence cannot destroy the essential distinction between virtue and vice, without destroying the nature of things. And this clearly proves that virtue and vice are immutably different in the nature of things, independently of the will or pleasure of the Supreme Being. I may add,

4. That the Deity cannot alter the nature of things so as to destroy the essential distinction between virtue and vice. We can conceive that God should make great alterations in us, and in the objects about us; but we cannot conceive that he should make any alterations in us, and in the objects about us, which should transform virtue into vice, or vice into virtue, or which should destroy their essential difference. No possible alteration in the nature of things can make it our duty to lie, or steal, or murder, or exercise the least malevolence towards our fellow-creatures. This must always be sinful in our world,

and in any other world of moral agents. Suppose God should create a new world, and fill it with a new race of moral beings. We cannot conceive that he should so frame the new world, and so constitute the minds of the new race of moral agents, as that they should feel themselves under moral obligation to lie, and steal, and murder, and to avoid every exercise and expression of real benevolence. But if God cannot destroy the essential difference between virtue and vice, either by an act of his power, or by an act of his authority, then it is absolutely certain that this difference depends not on his will, but on the nature of things, and must remain as long as moral beings exist.

I might now proceed to improve the subject, were it not proper to take notice of one or two objections which may be made against what has been said.

Objection 1. To suppose that the difference between virtue and vice results from the nature of things, is derogatory and injurious to the character of God. For, on this supposition, there is a standard of right and wrong superior to the will of the Deity, to which he is absolutely bound to submit.

To say that the difference between right and wrong does not depend upon the will of God, but upon the nature of things, is no more injurious to his character than to say that it does not depend upon his will whether two and two shall be equal to four; whether a circle and square shall be different figures; whether the whole shall be greater than a part; or whether a thing shall exist and not exist at the same time. These things do not depend upon the will of God, because they cannot depend upon his will. So the difference between virtue and vice does not depend upon the will of God, because his will cannot make or destroy this immutable difference. And it is more to the honor of God to suppose that he cannot, than that he can, perform impossibilities. But if the eternal rule of right must necessarily result from the nature of things, then it is no reproach to the Deity to suppose that he is morally obliged to conform to it. To set God above the law of rectitude, is not to exalt, but to debase his character. It is the glory of any moral agent to conform to moral obligation. The supreme excellency of the Deity consists, not in always doing what he pleases, but in always pleasing to do what is fit and proper in the nature of things.

Objection 2. There is no other difference between virtue and vice than what arises from custom, education, or caprice. Different nations judge differently upon moral subjects. What one nation esteems a vice, another nation esteems a virtue. We esteem stealing a moral evil; but the Spartans taught their children to steal, and approved and rewarded them for it.

We esteem murder a great and heinous crime; but the Chinese put their aged and useless parents to death, and destroy their weak, sickly, deformed children without the least remorse. Such contrariety in the opinions and practices of different nations refutes the notion of an immutable standard of right and wrong in the nature of things.

This objection is more specious than solid. For, in the first place, it is certain that all nations do feel and acknowledge the essential distinction between virtue and vice. They all have words to express this distinction between right and wrong. And since words are framed for use, we may presume that no nation would frame words to express ideas or feelings which never entered their minds. Besides, all nations have some penal laws, which are made to punish those who are guilty of criminal actions. It is, therefore, impossible to account for some words and some laws which are to be found among all nations, without supposing that they feel and regard the essential distinction between virtuous and vicious conduct.

This leads me to observe, in the second place, that no nation ever did deny the distinction between virtue and vice. Though the Spartans allowed their children to take things from others without their knowledge and consent, yet they did not mean to allow them to steal, in order to increase their wealth, and gratify a sordid avaricious spirit. They meant to distinguish between *taking* and *stealing*. The former they considered as a mere art, which was suited to teach their children skill and dexterity in their lawful pursuits; but the latter they detested and punished as an infamous crime. So when the Chinese expose their useless children, or their useless parents, they mean to do it as an act of kindness both to their friends and to the public. For in all other cases, they abhor murder, or the killing of men from malice prepense, as much as any other nation in the world. There is nothing, therefore, in the practice of the Spartans, nor in the practice of the Chinese, which leads us to suppose that any nation ever denied the essential distinction between virtue and vice. But though the heathens have never denied this distinction, yet their practice has often shown that they have mistaken vice for virtue. The Spartans did, in indulging their children in the practice of taking things from others without their knowledge and consent. And the Chinese are guilty of the same mistake, in their conduct towards their superannuated parents, and unpromising children. But these, and all other mistakes of the same nature, are to be ascribed to the corruption of the human heart, which blinds and stupifies the conscience, and prevents it from doing its proper office; which is to discover the nature of moral actions, and distin-

guish right from wrong, good from evil, in practice. Were it not for the blindness of the heart, all men would perceive the eternal rule of right, and, under the same circumstances, would form precisely the same judgment with respect to their duty. And corrupt as the world now is, mankind generally agree as well in their moral sentiments, as in their political, philosophical or metaphysical opinions. So that the general sentiments and practices of mankind concur with the reasons which we have offered, to prove the essential distinction between virtue and vice, in the nature of things.

It now remains to make a number of deductions from the important truth which we have explained and established.

1. If there be an immutable difference between virtue and vice, right and wrong, then there is a propriety in every man's judging for himself in matters of morality and religion. No man ought to rely upon the bare opinion of others, when he is capable of judging for himself, according to an infallible standard. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood, do not depend upon the opinions of men, but upon the nature of things. Every person ought, therefore, to examine every moral and religious subject for himself, and form his own judgment, without any regard to the authority or opinion of others. As God has given men their eyes to distinguish colors, and their ears to distinguish sounds, so he has given them their reason and conscience to distinguish truth and falsehood, right and wrong. And so long as they possess these natural and moral powers, they are under moral obligations to use them for the purposes for which they were given. The man who has eyes is obliged to see. The man who has ears is obliged to hear. And the man who has reason and conscience is obliged to examine and judge for himself, in matters of morality and religion. It is no less the duty than the right of every man to determine for himself what is true and false in theory, and what is right and wrong in practice. As others have no right to impose their opinions upon him, so he has no right to receive their opinions upon trust. It is his indispensable duty to embrace or reject all moral and religious sentiments, according to his own private judgment. It may be proper and necessary, in a thousand cases, to collect evidence from others; but after we have received all the information which they are able to give us on any subject, it then lies upon us to form our own opinions according to evidence, without any regard to the authority or opinion of fallible creatures. There is a true and false in principle, and a right and wrong in practice, which we are obliged to discover, and according to which we are obliged to believe and act.

2. If there be a standard of right and wrong in the nature of

things, then it is not impossible to arrive at absolute certainty, in our moral and religious sentiments. It is the opinion of many that we can never attain to certainty in any thing but what we are capable of demonstrating by figures, or immediately perceiving by our external senses. But there is no foundation for this supposition, if right and wrong, truth and falsehood, result from the nature of things. Many suppose that moral and mathematical subjects are totally different in respect to certainty. They imagine that we may attain to certainty in mathematics, but not in morals. But if moral truths as much result from the nature of things as mathematical, then no reason can be assigned why we may not arrive at certainty in morals as well as in mathematics. For we are as capable of discerning what is right and wrong, as what is true and false, in the nature of things. The Author of nature has given us the faculty of reason to discover mathematical truths, and the faculty of conscience to discover moral truths. Our conscience as plainly and as certainly tells us that murder is a crime, as our reason does that two and two are equal to four. And it is as much out of our power to disbelieve the dictates of our conscience, as the dictates of our reason. Hence we as certainly know moral and religious, as mathematical and philosophical truths. Certainty in mathematics consists in the intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement between two numbers. And certainty in morals consists in the intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement between the volitions and obligations of moral agents. It is as easy, therefore, to attain to certainty in morals as in mathematics. There are plain and difficult cases in both sciences. That murder is a crime, is a plain case in morals; and that three and three are six, is a plain case in mathematics. But there are difficult questions in morals, and no less difficult questions in mathematics. The difficult and doubtful cases, however, are no evidence that certainty cannot be attained in more plain and practical cases, and this is all that we mean to assert. We may attain to a certain knowledge of all those truths in morality and religion which are necessary to direct us in our moral and religious conduct. And so much certainty we ought to seek after, and not rest satisfied without obtaining it. God has given us moral as well as natural powers; and we ought to employ our moral powers in seeking after moral truth, as much as we employ our natural powers in searching after either mathematical, philosophical, metaphysical, or historical truth. We should always endeavor to attain to certainty in all our researches as far as we are able to do it; and never rest in conjecture or uncertainty, only when certainty is beyond our opportunities and capacities.

3. If right and wrong are founded in the nature of things, then it is impossible for any man to become a thorough skeptic in morality and religion. Many who profess to believe the existence and certainty of sensible objects, yet pretend to disbelieve the reality of virtue and vice, or the difference between moral good and moral evil. Those who are addressed in our text appear to have been such professed skeptics in matters of a moral and religious nature. But it is as truly impossible for men, in their right minds, to doubt of all moral and religious truths, as to doubt of their own existence, or the existence of the objects of sense with which they are constantly surrounded. For they are as much obliged to believe their mental as their bodily eyes. When their bodily eyes are open at noon-day, and a picture is presented before them, they are obliged to see it, and believe its existence. So when their eyes are open at noon-day, and an act of barbarous murder is committed before them, they are obliged to see and believe not only the reality, but the criminality of the action. And it is no more within their power to doubt of the criminality of the murderer, than of the death of the murdered. Moral objects as irresistibly obtrude upon the conscience, as visible objects do upon the eye. And a man can no more avoid feeling and believing moral truths, than he can avoid seeing natural objects, when both are placed before his mind with equal plainness. Every moral agent is constrained to believe or doubt, according to the evidence which he perceives. Doubting as much depends upon evidence as believing. A man may wish to doubt when it is out of his power to doubt, just as he may wish to believe, when it is out of his power to believe. Believing and doubting are always governed by what the mind perceives to be the evidence for or against any truth or fact. A philosopher may tell us that the planets are inhabited, and exhibit such evidence as may create belief in some, and doubt in others. But if he should pretend to tell us the names and numbers of the planetary inhabitants, could he gain the belief of a single person? If men could believe and disbelieve at their pleasure, then they might as easily believe a history written in this world concerning the inhabitants of the planets, as a history written in America, concerning the American revolution; or they might as easily disbelieve every thing, as believe any thing. But if doubting as well as believing depends upon evidence, then no man can doubt, any more than he can believe, without evidence. If he perceives no evidence against his own existence, he cannot doubt of his own existence. If he perceives no evidence against the existence of his fellow men, he cannot doubt of their existence. If he perceives no evidence against the exist-

ence of virtue and vice, he cannot doubt of their existence. But who can perceive any evidence against his own existence? Who can perceive any evidence against the existence of his fellow men? Who can perceive any evidence against the existence of virtue and vice? And therefore, who can be a thorough skeptic in matters of morality and religion? No man ever was, or ever can be, a thorough sceptic in respect to religion and morality, without being a thorough skeptic in respect to all the objects of sense. Religious skepticism is religious hypocrisy; and the man who professes to be a skeptic in religion, professes to be a hypocrite.

4. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be founded in the nature of things, then it is not a matter of indifference what moral and religious sentiments mankind imbibe and maintain. They are obliged to judge and believe according to evidence, and if they do otherwise, they are chargeable with guilt before God, and in the sight of their own consciences. God has given them evidence of truth and falsehood, in the nature of things, and given them powers and faculties to distinguish the one from the other; and if they choose darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth, they must answer for their folly and guilt. God has diffused moral light over the face of creation, and left all his reasonable creatures without excuse, if they either doubt or disbelieve his existence. The heathen are criminal for disbelieving the being of their great and glorious Creator. They are capable of seeing the mighty evidences of his eternal power and Godhead, and therefore they are highly criminal for shutting their eyes against the clear light of the divine existence. The Mohammedans are capable of seeing the error and superstition and idolatry which are contained in the Koran, and therefore are inexcusable for disbelieving the great and glorious truths which are clearly revealed in the works of nature, and in the pure word of God, which their false teacher corrupted and perverted. The papists are highly criminal for all their superstition and idolatry which are forbidden in the holy scriptures. And the deists, who deny the truth and divinity of the Bible, are guilty of still greater blindness of mind and obstinacy of heart, in disbelieving the testimony which God hath given of his Son. Nor are heretics, who corrupt, pervert and deny particular doctrines of divine revelation, excusable in the sight of God, who has commanded them to understand, believe and love the truth. However lightly some may think or speak of errors in morality and religion, it is a matter of serious importance for every man to form his opinions according to the nature of things, and the revealed will of God. Voluntary ignorance and error will meet with the divine displeasure at the great and last day.

5. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be founded in the nature of things, then there appears to be a great propriety in God's appointing a day of judgment. Such a day appears proper and necessary on the account of the moral creation. God has no occasion for it on his own account. He always knows and does what is perfectly right in the nature of things. But it cannot appear to his reasonable creatures that he treats them all right, without his laying before them the feelings and actions upon which he regulates his conduct. A clear and full exhibition of facts, at the great day, will unfold right and wrong with respect to every being in the universe. It will unfold the rectitude of God's conduct in every instance. When God tells the universe how he has treated every creature, and how every creature has treated him, every creature will be capable of seeing the wisdom, the goodness, or justice of God, in all his conduct towards men, angels and devils. And when God lays open the hearts and lives of all his creatures, they will then be capable of judging who ought to go to heaven, and who ought to go to hell; or who ought to be happy, and who ought to be miserable, to all eternity. Such a clear and full exhibition of facts will clear the innocent and condemn the guilty, in the minds of all intelligent beings. And from the day of judgment to all eternity, every intelligent being will possess clear light respecting himself, his God and his fellow creatures. This will give an emphasis to the joys of heaven and the miseries of hell, and serve as bars and bolts to sever the righteous and wicked to interminable ages. This will shut fear out of heaven, and hope out of hell, for ever and ever.

6. We learn from what has been said, that all who go to heaven will go there by the unanimous voice of the whole universe. They will be judged to be fit for heaven by God, by Christ, by angels, by devils, by the finally miserable, and by themselves. It will be the real opinion of all, after attending the process of the great day, that every one who shall have received the approbation of the final Judge, should be exalted to the honors and distinctions and enjoyments of the heavenly world, and there live for ever under the smiles of their heavenly Father. And such a clear and decided opinion in the favor of the blessed will add an inconceivable satisfaction to their minds for ever.

7. We learn from what has been said, that all who are excluded from heaven will be excluded from it by the unanimous voice of all moral beings. There will not be a dissenting voice from the dreadful sentence: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." All who shall meet with the disapprobation of the final Judge will equally meet

with the disapprobation of all the inhabitants of heaven and hell, together with the condemnation of their own enlightened consciences. It will appear clearly to the view of the universe, that all who are condemned and punished ought to be condemned and punished for ever. Not one who is lost will have one in heaven or hell to take his part, or complain of his final and eternal destination. And what an intolerable weight will this add to that great and endless punishment which shall fall upon the vessels of wrath who are fitted for destruction!

This subject now admonishes all those who trifle with moral things, and make a mock at sin, of their extreme guilt and danger. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." The great day of light is coming, which will dissipate the mists and clouds in which stupid sinners have concealed themselves, and which will expose their stupidity and guilt both to themselves and to the universe. Then erroneous sinners, secret sinners, secure sinners, and skeptical sinners, will appear to themselves, and to all intelligent beings, in all their depravity, folly and guilt, and become swift witnesses against themselves, that they have deserved the united and eternal displeasure of the whole universe. Then it will be beyond their power to trifle with right and wrong, good and evil, or to despise the just and awful sentence which will fix them in endless darkness, guilt and despair. "Wo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." The universal contempt of God, of angels and of men, will be more than your wounded guilty souls can endure. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear!"

SERMON XI.

CONSCIENCE.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. — Acts, xxiv. 16.

It seems rather strange that those who have critically surveyed the powers and operations of their own minds, should entertain very different ideas of conscience. One tells us that conscience is nothing else but our own judgment of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions. A second tells us that conscience is properly no more than reason itself, considered as instructed in regard to the rule we ought to follow. A third tells us that there is a principle of reflection in men by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their actions. A fourth tells us that conscience, or the moral sense, is a *cordial* as well as *intellectual* exercise. This diversity of opinions respecting conscience has been the occasion of many disputes upon moral and religious subjects, and of many errors, not only in theory but in practice. It may be of some service, therefore, to consider conscience in both a speculative and practical light. The apostle speaks of it in both these views. He represents it as a distinct faculty of the mind, which he earnestly endeavored to keep always free from offence. "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." These words naturally lead us to consider,

I. What conscience is; and,

II. What we must do in order to keep it void of offence.

I. We are to consider what conscience is. This is a very difficult as well as important inquiry. But since we know that

conscience belongs to the mind, we must look within, and search for it there. Though the mind be immaterial and indivisible, yet it consists of more than one faculty. A mental faculty properly means a mental power of receiving ideas and impressions, independently of the will. According to this definition we shall discover a number of distinct faculties in the human mind. Perception is a power of receiving ideas independently of the will. If we open our eyes in a clear day, we cannot help perceiving the visible objects around us, whether we wish to perceive them or not. Perception, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Reason is the power of receiving, comparing and compounding ideas, independently of the will. If we hear a man assert that two and two are equal to four, we cannot help perceiving the truth of the proposition, whether we wish to perceive it or not. Or if we hear a man demonstrate the immortality of the soul, we cannot help drawing the conclusion that we must exist in a future state, whether we wish to exist in a future state or not. Reason, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Memory is a power of retaining and recalling past ideas, independently of the will. If we hear what we have heard before, or see what we have seen before, we cannot help recollecting that we have heard or seen such things, whether we wish to recollect them or not. Memory, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind.

Conscience is likewise a power of receiving ideas and impressions independently of the will. If we are credibly told that one man has killed another from malice prepense, we cannot help perceiving the criminality of the murderer, whether we wish to perceive it or not. Conscience, therefore, is a distinct faculty of the mind. But to make this more fully appear, I proceed to observe,

1. That conscience is seated in the breast.* The pleasure or pain arising from any mental faculty clearly determines the place where it resides and operates. We all know that the operation of conscience more immediately and sensibly affects the breast. It is here we feel pleasure or pain, whenever we are approved or condemned by conscience. But when we freely employ the powers of perception, reason and memory, we find it is the head, which is either agreeably or disagreeably affected. If it be safe, therefore, to follow the dictates of daily experience in reasoning upon the mind, we may safely con-

* It is impossible, perhaps, to determine the local seat of the soul, or of any of its faculties, since spirit does not occupy space. By the seat of conscience, therefore, is meant its seat of *influence*.

clude that the conscience, which is seated in the breast, and performs all its operations there, is entirely distinct from all the mental powers, which are seated in the head.

2. The conscience may be impaired, without impairing any other faculty of the mind. A man who pursues evil courses and forms evil habits, will necessarily blunt the edge of conscience and weaken its moral discernment. But after he has thoroughly seared his conscience, he may still retain his reason, memory, and every other intellectual faculty, in their full force and activity. How often do the most loose and abandoned wretches, who have stifled and well-nigh extinguished conscience, appear to reason as well and to write as well upon any abstruse subject, as those of the most exemplary virtue and piety! This clearly proves that conscience may be impaired, without impairing any other intellectual faculty. But how can this be accounted for, without supposing conscience to be entirely distinct from every other mental power? If conscience were perception, then nothing could impair it but what impairs perception. Or if conscience were reason, then nothing could impair it but what impairs reason. It is a well-known fact that any distinct faculty of the mind may be distinctly impaired. Old age often impairs the memory, without impairing reason. A delirium often impairs reason, without impairing the memory. And blindness, or deafness, often impairs the perception, without impairing any other mental faculty. If these facts prove that either perception, reason or memory is a distinct faculty of the mind, then they equally prove that conscience is so. For it clearly appears from observation and experience, that conscience, like every other distinct faculty of the soul, may be distinctly and separately impaired.

3. There is often a propriety in appealing from reason to conscience; which is another evidence that these are really distinct faculties. In reasoning upon things of a moral nature, it is proper and necessary in many cases to appeal from the deductions of reason to the dictates of conscience. Those who are addicted to any particular vice, often endeavor to justify their conduct, and reason very plausibly in their own defence. But if they would fairly appeal from reason to conscience, conscience would immediately condemn both their false reasoning and criminal practice. If we hear a loose and subtile man reason very ingeniously against the truth of the scriptures, we may with great propriety desire him to consult his conscience upon this serious subject. And if his conscience be not extremely stupid, it will immediately tell him that his arguments are false and the scriptures are true. Or suppose two persons should dispute upon the practice of trading in the souls of men,

and one should endeavor to prove it to be right upon the principles of reason, and the other, instead of offering a single argument against it, should only appeal to conscience; would not conscience, in opposition to a thousand arguments from reason, clearly decide in this case, and condemn this inhuman practice? Now if conscience may justly claim a right to correct the errors of reason as well as the errors of the heart, then it must be a distinct and superior faculty of the mind. And this is what all mankind allow to be true, by their common practice of appealing from the court of reason to the court of conscience, upon any moral or religious subject. I may farther observe,

4. Conscience appears to be a distinct faculty, from its performing various offices which no other intellectual faculty can perform. Here let us take a particular view of the various and peculiar offices of conscience. And,

First. It is the proper office of conscience to teach us the moral difference between virtue and vice. We are all capable of discerning the moral and immutable distinction between right and wrong in the actions of moral agents. But if we examine our mental faculties, we shall find none but conscience which can enable us to discover the moral quality of moral actions.

We certainly cannot discover right and wrong by Memory, which is only a faculty of recalling past ideas and impressions.

By Perception, we discover nothing but natural objects, and their natural effects. This power is common to all sensitive natures. Brutes perceive the objects around them, and their natural tendency to do them good or hurt. They perceive the natural tendency of fire and water, and take peculiar care to avoid being burned by the one, or drowned by the other. But they have no idea of right or wrong, or of virtue and vice. And bare perception in men serves no higher purpose than in brutes. If we possessed no mental faculty superior to perception, we could never discover the distinction between moral good and evil, nor perform a single action which deserves either praise or blame.

If we now examine the power of Reason, we shall find it equally destitute of moral discernment. It cannot discover the least merit or demerit in the conduct of moral agents. It can only measure the advantage or disadvantage, the natural good or evil, arising from their actions. If a man should spread a false report concerning a certain merchant, and that report should ruin the merchant's business, reason could exactly calculate the damages done to the merchant, but it could not discover the criminality and ill-desert of the liar. In the view of

reason a sufficient sum of money would completely repair the damages, and settle the whole affair. But in the view of conscience, which discerns the moral quality of actions, all the gold of Ophir could not take away the sin or moral evil of lying. Hence it appears that conscience performs a part which no other faculty of the mind can perform.

Secondly. It is the proper office of conscience to give us a sense of moral obligation. We all feel that we ought to do some things, and ought not to do others. Our reason, however, knows nothing about *ought* and *ought not*, and can give us no sense of moral obligation. It is only our conscience, which tells us what is right and what is wrong, and at the same time makes us *feel* that we ought to do what is right, and ought not to do what is wrong. Reason can discover the advantage of virtue, and the disadvantage of vice; but it is conscience only which can make us feel our moral obligation to pursue the former, and to avoid the latter. Thus, for instance, reason tells us that eternal happiness is infinitely more valuable than temporal enjoyments, and therefore it will really be for our interest to give up temporal enjoyments for the sake of securing eternal happiness; but it is the part of conscience to make us feel that we ought, or that it is our indispensable duty, to renounce the whole world rather than to lose our own souls.

Thirdly. It is the proper office of conscience to approve men for what is right, and to condemn them for what is wrong, in all their moral conduct. The apostle represents conscience as doing this office in the breasts of the Gentiles. "These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while *accusing*, or else *excusing* one another." A man's reason may teach him that he has acted wisely in doing good, or that he has acted foolishly in doing evil; but it is his conscience only which claims a right to call him to an account, and either approve or condemn him, according to the motives from which he has acted.

Fourthly. It is the proper office of conscience to make men feel that they deserve to be rewarded or punished, according to their works. All mankind are capable of feeling their just deserts, though they are often unwilling to receive the due reward of their deeds. We have a remarkable instance of this in the case of Joseph's brethren, while they were suffering for their envy and cruelty under the correcting hand of God. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when

he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Reason had suffered them to live year after year in carnal ease and stupidity; but when conscience awoke, it gave them a lively sense of guilt, and made them feel that they justly deserved the severest tokens of the divine displeasure. Thus it appears from the proper offices of conscience, and from various other considerations, that it is a peculiar and distinct faculty of the mind. The way is now prepared to show,

II. What we must do in order to keep a clear and inoffensive conscience.

The apostle tells us that he exercised himself "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." The connection of these words, and the occasion upon which they were spoken, may help us to discover their real import. Paul was making his defence before Felix. And, after a few introductory remarks, he freely owns that he had embraced that religion which his adversaries called heresy. But yet he pleads that he had acted an honest and upright part in adopting the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. And to confirm his declaration, he assures the governor that he had made it his practice to follow the dictates of conscience in the general course of his conduct respecting both God and man. In this connection, therefore, he must mean by a conscience void of offence, a conscience free from reproach or remorse. And such a conscience may be maintained. For our conscience can never reproach us so long as we faithfully obey its dictates. But the serious and practical question now is, what we must do to maintain the peace and approbation of conscience. This, the apostle intimates, requires great exertion. "Herein do I *exercise* myself to have always a conscience void of offence."

All the faculties of the mind are in some measure under the influence of the will. Though they are all distinct from the will, yet it depends upon the will whether they shall be freely and properly exercised. We have the power of perceiving external objects; but it depends upon the will whether we shall open or shut our eyes upon them. We have the power of reasoning upon various subjects; but it depends upon the will whether we shall improve or neglect to improve this noble faculty. So we have the power of discerning our duty, and the obligations we are under to do it; but it depends upon the will whether we shall exercise or stifle our moral discernment. All the natural faculties are talents, which the will can either use or abuse. Hence our own free and voluntary exertions are necessary, in order to maintain a conscience void of offence. We may, if we please, always have a pure and peaceable con-

science; but in order to reach such a high and happy attainment, we must always exercise ourselves in the following respects.

1. We must give conscience full liberty to judge, before we act. It always stands ready to judge, and to judge infallibly right. It belongs to its office to inform us what we ought, and what we ought not to do. And if we would only allow it to do its office before we act, it would never reproach us after we have acted. But if we either neglect or refuse to consult conscience upon what we are going to do, and presume to act before we have obtained its approbation, it will certainly sooner or later condemn us for our rash and unwarrantable proceedings. Conscience claims a right of judging and dictating in all our moral conduct; and it is our indispensable duty in all cases, to give it full liberty of exercising this just and sacred right.

2. We must give conscience not only a full liberty, but also a fair opportunity of judging before we act. Conscience always judges according to evidence; and if the evidence be false or partial, it will necessarily bring in a wrong verdict. We should be impartial in consulting conscience, and lay all the evidence of the case before it, that it may give a full and final decision. For, though we may impose upon conscience for a time, by false or partial evidence, yet it will finally discover the imposition, and condemn us for our folly and guilt. A person may have the approbation of conscience while he is acting, and yet afterwards feel self-condemned for what he has done. And this will always be the case, if we allow a corrupt heart to blind the conscience by false or partial evidence. Here lies the necessity of peculiar exertion, in order to have always a conscience void of offence. Though every instance of duty be really a case of conscience, yet there are some more doubtful and difficult duties, which are more commonly and more emphatically called cases of conscience. And it is in these cases, more especially, that we ought to collect, compare and weigh evidence, in order to give conscience a fair opportunity of judging. In a thousand plain cases, it decides in a moment what is right or wrong; but in doubtful, difficult and important cases, it never gives a full and final decision, until all the evidence has been collected and exhibited. Herein, therefore, we ought to exercise ourselves, that conscience may have a fair opportunity of judging before we act.

3. We must cordially obey the dictates of conscience while we are acting. The dictates of conscience must be obeyed from the heart, as well as the divine commands. Men may, indeed, deceive themselves, and imagine they have acted

conscientiously, when they have paid a mere external obedience to the dictates of conscience. But whenever conscience shall review their conduct, it will condemn them for their undutiful spirit. Conscience tells every man that all real obedience or disobedience lies in the heart; and that he is worthy either of praise or blame, according to the motives which govern his conduct. We can never, therefore, satisfy the demands of conscience, unless we act agreeably to its dictates from an upright heart. But as long as we properly consult and cordially obey the dictates of conscience, it will approve our conduct, and afford us that inward peace which is the very balm of life. And this may well animate us to exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence. But since there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not, it is necessary to add,

4. That we ought to let conscience do its office after we have acted, as well as before. Conscience will be regarded sooner or later. If we neglect to consult or to obey it before we act, or while we are acting, it will claim a right to review our conduct and to condemn us for it. And since we are all liable to disregard and stifle conscience while we are pursuing the concerns of life, we ought to give it full liberty and a fair opportunity of reviewing our past actions, and of bringing in a true and faithful, though a disagreeable verdict. Self-examination is highly proper and necessary for such depraved and imperfect creatures as we are. And we cannot maintain a conscience void of offence, without frequently exercising ourselves in this serious and important duty. A number of instructive and useful inferences may now be fairly drawn from what has been said in this discourse.

1. It appears from the description which has been given of the nature and offices of conscience, that it is a superior faculty of the mind, and absolutely necessary in order to constitute us moral agents. There is an essential difference between agents, and moral agents; and it is conscience, which forms this difference between men and animals. All the lower species are agents. They act under the influence of motives. They choose and refuse in the view of external objects. One species chooses to live in the water, and another chooses to live on the land. One species chooses to live in a warm climate, and another in a cold. One species chooses to feed on fruits, another on fish, and another on fowls. But though these and all other species of animals act voluntarily in the view of motives, yet they are not moral agents; because they can neither distinguish between right and wrong, nor feel any moral obligation either to act, or to refrain from acting. And were men

destitute of conscience, they would be equally incapable of feeling moral obligation, and of distinguishing the moral quality of actions. Neither perception nor reason could give them this moral discernment. It is conscience, therefore, which constitutes them moral agents, and raises them to the rank of accountable beings.

2. If it be true that conscience is a distinct faculty of the soul, and necessarily constitutes a moral agent, then it is very natural to conclude that infants are *moral* agents as soon as they are *agents*. Though they are born weak and helpless creatures, yet they very early discover not only motion, but action. When they are but a few days old, they appear to act voluntarily in the view of motives. They are pleased with some objects and displeased with others. They never fail, for instance, to prefer light to darkness and sweet to bitter. By such instances of choosing and refusing, they appear to be agents, or to act voluntarily in the view of motives. But we cannot suppose that they are mere agents, in these free, spontaneous, voluntary exertions. For if they were mere agents, they would not be men in miniature, nor be capable of becoming moral agents. Mere agents are utterly incapable of becoming moral agents. This has been demonstrated by all the experiments which have been made upon tamed animals. Though they have been taught to do many curious things, and to imitate a thousand human actions, yet they have never been taught to distinguish virtue from vice, nor to feel the force of moral obligation. They are by nature mere agents; and without a new nature they cannot be made, nor become moral agents. And if infants were at first mere agents, they could never be made, nor become moral agents. Neither experience, nor observation, nor instruction, could give them the faculty of moral discernment. We may use many means to strengthen and refine the mental powers of infants and children; but there are no means to be used to give them any new intellectual faculty. If conscience, therefore, be an essential faculty of the human mind, it must belong to it in infancy. And if infants possess this faculty of moral discernment, then they must of necessity become moral agents as soon as they become agents. There seems to be no way to avoid this conclusion, but to suppose that conscience cannot be exercised so early as the other faculties of the mind. But how does it appear that conscience cannot be exercised as early as any other intellectual faculty? It does not appear from experience. For every person knows that he has been able to distinguish right from wrong, and to feel a sense of guilt, ever since he can remember. It does not appear from observation; for infants discover plain marks of moral depravity, and appear

to act wrong as soon as they begin to act. And it does not appear from scripture; for the Bible represents infants as sinful, guilty creatures, as soon as they are born; which plainly implies that they are moral agents. In a word, scripture, reason, observation and experience, are all in favor of the moral agency of infants. And if we do not admit that moral agency commences in infancy, it is impossible to determine, or even to form a probable conjecture, when it does commence.

3. If conscience be the only faculty of the mind which gives us a sense of moral obligation, then its dictates are always to be followed. Though all allow that we ought to follow the dictates of conscience when it is rightly informed, yet some suppose we ought not to follow its dictates when it is misinformed and erroneous. As this is a question concerning duty, so we are obliged to refer it to the decision of conscience. But if we refer it to conscience, it will instantaneously determine that we ought always to follow its dictates. Conscience never fails to lay us under moral obligation to regard its precepts and prohibitions. If it tells us that a certain mode of conduct is right, it equally tells us that we ought to pursue it; or if it tells us that a certain mode of conduct is wrong, it equally tells us that we ought to avoid it. As conscience always speaks with equal authority whether enlightened or unenlightened, so we are always bound to obey it, whether enlightened or unenlightened. There is no occasion to dispute the authority of conscience, or propriety in doing it, since it will always bear us out in obeying its dictates from a sincere intention. For if conscience ever discovers that we have submitted to it when it dictated wrong, it will justify our cordial submission, and pronounce it an act of duty. It is indeed impossible to put a case, in which it would be right to counteract conscience. For it is extremely absurd to suppose that we both ought and ought not to do the same action. If there could be an instance in which we ought not to obey the dictates of conscience, it is evident that in such an instance we ought not to follow any other guide. To suppose, therefore, that we ought not to follow the dictates of an erroneous conscience, is to suppose that whenever our conscience becomes erroneous, we cease to be under moral obligation, and of course cease to be moral agents.

4. It appears from what has been said upon a clear conscience, that men may be highly criminal in doing those things which they imagine conscience really requires. They often consult conscience with great partiality. They consult it with respect to their external conduct, without consulting it with respect to their internal motives. And in all such cases, they may externally obey the voice of conscience, while they inter-

nally disobey it. This appears to have been the ground of Paul's deception while he was persecuting the church of Christ. He said to Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." While Paul was doing these things, his conscience seemed to justify his conduct; but it afterwards condemned him for being such a vile and malevolent persecutor. The truth of the case appears to be this. Paul considered Christ as a real impostor, and his followers as deluded fanatics, who were endeavoring to subvert the laws and religion of their country. And so long as he viewed them in this light, he verily thought it was his duty to oppose and destroy them, agreeably to the law respecting idolaters. But he never consulted conscience, with respect to the motives of his conduct, or the temper of mind from which he acted. And this was the sole cause of his deception. Had he inquired of conscience whether he ought to oppose and persecute christians from a cruel and malevolent spirit, his conscience would have forbidden him to act from such a selfish and malignant heart. He deceived himself by imposing upon conscience. And mere moralists at this day deceive themselves in the same manner. They verily think they are conscientiously doing their duty, while they are pursuing their honest callings, and externally obeying the divine commands. They have the testimony of conscience that they are doing those things which they ought to do. But if they would only consult conscience with respect to the selfish motives of their conduct, it would condemn every thing they do as altogether criminal and displeasing to God. It is therefore wholly owing to the partial manner of their consulting conscience, that they vainly imagine they are doing God service, while they are living in the habitual commission of sin. This great and dangerous delusion Solomon describes, as a solemn warning to all those who are walking in a serious and conscientious road to destruction. "Every way of man," says he, "is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts." And again he says, "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

5. If conscience be entirely distinct from the heart and every other power of the mind, then sinners grow worse instead of better, under the strivings of the Spirit. The Spirit of God in

striving with sinners, only sets their natural faculties in motion, and awakens conscience to do its office. But while the conscience convinces sinners of their guilt and danger, their hearts naturally rise in direct and sensible opposition to God. This was the experience of Paul, under the convictions of conscience, according to his own account. "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." While Paul was under the strivings of the Spirit, he only saw his past sinfulness, but found that his corrupt heart took occasion from the light and conviction of conscience to rise into higher and more sensible opposition to God. Sin revived, and he died. Nor was this a singular case. All sinners appear to themselves to sin faster under conviction, than they ever did in a state of spiritual ignorance and stupidity. And this appearance is no vain delusion, but a most alarming reality. For the light and conviction of conscience, instead of restraining and softening their hearts, only serve to draw forth their corruptions, and aggravate their guilt. And though an increasing sense of danger and guilt makes them earnestly seek to please God by every outward act of duty and devotion, yet their hearts continually wax worse and worse, until they are effectually subdued by special grace.

6. If conscience be a distinct and essential faculty of the mind, then no sinner is beyond the reach of conviction. Some sinners appear to be entirely stupid, and seem to bid defiance to the arrows of conviction. But though they have stifled, yet they have not destroyed conscience. They still carry that faithful witness in their breast, which is able to discover all their guilt, and to destroy all their peace. God can easily awaken their conscience to do its office; and whenever he does command his vicegerent to speak in his name, they will find themselves to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. All sinners, therefore, are equally liable to conviction. Those who sin in secret, where they imagine no eye can see them, are constantly exposed to the reproach and condemnation of conscience, which alone is instead of a thousand witnesses. Those who deny the divinity of the scriptures, the existence of the Deity, and even the moral and immutable distinction between virtue and vice, cannot always maintain their criminal stupidity; but must sooner or later find themselves to be men, and feel the remorse of a guilty conscience. And those who stifle and impose upon conscience by the outward appearances of

virtue and religion, may be thoroughly convinced of their real hypocrisy and total corruption of heart. Though sinners of this class seem to be the most out of the reach of conviction, yet they have sometimes been awakened to see their delusion, and to realize their danger and guilt. Here Paul naturally occurs as a remarkable instance. For a long time he deceived and pacified conscience by the purity of his life. For, as touching the righteousness of the law, he was entirely blameless. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. His awakened conscience condemned him, not only for his injurious conduct towards Jesus of Nazareth and his faithful followers, but for all his shining virtues and self-righteousness, which had well-nigh proved his ruin. His conviction was extremely sudden, unexpected and pungent. From the highest pitch of false zeal and self-confidence, it threw him helpless and hopeless at the foot of divine sovereignty. This is a solemn warning to all sinners, and more especially to self-righteous sinners, not to deceive and impose upon conscience. For the longer they resist and stifle its monitions, the more power they will give it to disturb their peace, destroy their hopes, and fill their souls with insupportable anguish and distress.

7. If it be the proper office of conscience to reprove all evil exercises and sinful actions, then it is impossible that sinners should live an easy and quiet life. As they never have a conscience void of offence, so they never have a solid foundation for inward peace and serenity of mind. Though they are surrounded with the blessings of providence, and enjoy the esteem and applause of fallible men, yet they are continually subject to inward reproach and self-condemnation. Their heart and conscience are always at variance. And though they endeavor to stifle the voice of conscience, yet it often assumes its sovereign right to accuse and condemn them, in spite of their hearts. Hence they live a most unhappy and restless life. They travel with pain all their days. A dreadful sound is in their ears. A fire not blown consumeth them. In the midst of laughter, their hearts are sorrowful. Yea, there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

8. If conscience will always approve of a sincere and upright heart, then those who live a virtuous and holy life must necessarily be happy. Accordingly we read, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." And again, the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Those who live in the practice of virtue and religion, have a conscience void of offence, which yields them that peace which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot

take away. Though the apostles and primitive christians were generally despised and opposed, yet they found a perpetual source of comfort and joy in the peace and approbation of their own conscience. And if we only live the same holy and devout life which they lived, we may also humbly and confidently say as they said: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Amen.

SERMON XII.

GAIN NOT GODLINESS.

PERVERSE disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. From such withdraw thyself. — 1 TIMOTHY, vi. 5.

TO REASON justly from a false principle is the perfection of sophistry, which it is much more difficult to expose, than to refute false reasoning. It is easy to discover any error in false reasoning, and by just reasoning to refute it. But if men reason justly from any principle, whether true or false, their reasoning is conclusive, and the more it is examined, the more conclusive it will appear. We often find as strong and conclusive reasoning in favor of error, as in favor of truth. The only proper way, therefore, to expose the errors of profound sophisters, is to make it appear that they have built all their just and conclusive reasonings upon some false or absurd principle. Accordingly Paul took this method to expose men of corrupt minds in his day, who endeavored, by their sophistical and perverse disputings, to subvert the foundation of all religion and morality. They reasoned fairly and forcibly from a false principle, which they arbitrarily assumed. The apostle, therefore, does not pretend to examine their arguments, but only exposes and condemns the false and primary principle upon which they had founded their whole system of error. This appears from the words I have read and those immediately connected. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful

and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: From such withdraw thyself." These sophisters took it for granted that "gain is godliness," and from this false principle it was easy to prove, by fair and conclusive reasoning, that servants were not bound to obey their masters, nor children to obey their parents, nor subjects to obey their rulers, nor creatures to obey their Creator. This was the most artful way of spreading the poison of fatal errors. The apostle, therefore, seasonably warns Timothy to avoid those evil men and seducers, lest he should be led astray by their subtile and plausible sophistry. "From such withdraw thyself." Hence we may naturally conclude,

That men are greatly exposed to embrace the absurd doctrine that virtue consists in utility. I shall attempt,

I. To explain the meaning of the doctrine.

II. To demonstrate its absurdity.

III. To show why men are greatly exposed to embrace it.

I. I am to explain the meaning of the doctrine that virtue consists in utility.

This sentiment has been maintained by those who believe, as well as by those who disbelieve divine revelation. Divines as well as infidels have supposed that virtue consists in utility, and both have clearly explained their meaning. Bishop Law, in his "Theory of Religion," after exploding what he considered a wrong notion of virtue, gives what he calls a more just and enlightened definition of it. "Now, since the subject of morality has been reduced to a science, and as such, built on rational principles, the sense of all the terms relating to it has been pretty well agreed upon, and it is generally understood to include thus much: *The doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.* Obedience to God is the *principle*, the good of mankind the *matter*, our own happiness the *end*, of all that is properly termed moral virtue. We cannot, therefore, distinguish between that which leads to the *ultimatum* of all private happiness, and real virtue; since nothing is materially good on any other account than as it properly conduces to such end; nothing bad or vicious, farther than it tends to the contrary; and the producing of the first among mankind entirely and uniformly, must be true virtue, call it moral or artificial, so long as we have

any meaning to the word." According to this labored definition of virtue, it wholly consists in utility, and all its excellence lies, not in its nature, but in its tendency to promote personal happiness. Dr. Paley, a friend and admirer of Bishop Law, has taken his definition of moral virtue, in his "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy," from that favorite author. And he farther observes, "It is the utility of any moral rule, which alone constitutes the obligation of it." The most ingenious infidels give the same definition of virtue, and argue from it with great advantage to their cause. Hume, in his Essays, places all virtue in utility, and represents every quality of a man, whether intellectual or corporeal, which is agreeable and useful, as a constituent part of his moral character. But there is no infidel writer who has so openly and boldly advocated the doctrine that virtue solely consists in utility, as Godwin, in his "Inquiry concerning Political Justice." In that work, he abundantly asserts that happiness is the supreme good, and that any thing whatever, whether animate or inanimate, which tends to promote it, is really virtuous. I will cite a few out of many of his expressions to this import. "Morality is that system of conduct which is determined by a consideration of the greatest general good; he is entitled to the highest moral approbation, whose conduct is, in the greatest number of instances, or in the most momentous instances, governed by views of benevolence, and made subservient to public utility." "Morality consists entirely in an estimate of consequences; he is truly the virtuous man who produces the greatest portion of benefit his situation will admit." "Morality is nothing else but a calculation of consequences, and an adoption of that mode of conduct which, upon the most comprehensive view, appears to be attended with a balance of general pleasure and happiness." "An action, however pure may be the intention of the actor, the tendency of which is mischievous, or which shall merely be nugatory and useless in its character, is not a virtuous action." "In deciding the merits of others, we are bound for the most part to proceed in the same manner, as in deciding the merits of inanimate substances. The turning point is utility. Intention is of no farther value than as it leads to utility: it is the means, and not the end." "The result of this part of the subject is, that those persons have been grossly mistaken, who taught that virtue was to be pursued for its own sake. Virtue is upon no other account valuable, than as it is the instrument of the most exquisite pleasure." All who suppose that virtue consists in utility, agree in maintaining that virtue has no intrinsic excellence, as an end, but only a relative excellence, as a means to promote the only ultimate end in nature, that is,

happiness. Since happiness is, in their view, the supreme good, and misery the supreme evil, they conclude that the whole duty of men consists in pursuing happiness, and avoiding misery. Upon this single principle, that virtue wholly consists in its tendency to promote natural good, in distinction from natural evil, Godwin has founded a scheme of sentiments which, carried into practice, would subvert all morality, religion and government.

II. I proceed to demonstrate the absurdity of supposing that "gain is godliness," or that virtue essentially consists in utility. This sentiment is not only false, but absurd, because it contradicts the plainest dictates of reason and conscience.

1. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that virtue may be predicated of inanimate objects. These have a natural tendency, in various ways, to promote human happiness. The whole material system with which we are connected, was made for our habitation, convenience and benefit, and constantly answers these useful and important purposes. But not to wander in so wide a field of material objects, let us fix our attention upon the sun, whose influence is the most extensive and beneficial. By its diurnal and annual revolutions, it diffuses light and heat over the face of the whole earth, and promotes the life and growth of every rational and irrational creature. And if utility constitutes moral virtue, where shall we find a more virtuous object than this beautiful and beneficent luminary? The sun has been dispensing innumerable benefits to mankind for many thousands of years, and if its moral virtue be in proportion to its utility, there is not a moral agent on earth whose moral worth is equal to the moral excellence of this material, inanimate, unconscious object. Those who admit that virtue consists in utility, cannot deny this consequence, however absurd it appears. Nor does Godwin pretend to deny it, but expressly allows that virtue may be predicated of inanimate, senseless matter. These are his own words: "There are two considerations relative to any particular being, that generate approbation, and this whether the being be possessed of consciousness or not. These considerations are capacity, and the application of capacity. We approve of a sharp knife rather than a blunt one, because its capacity is greater. We approve of its being employed in carving food, rather than in maiming men or other animals, because that application of its capacity is preferable. But all approbation or preference is relative to utility, or general good. A knife is as capable as a man of being employed in purposes of utility, and the one is no more free than the other, as to its employment. The mode in which a knife is made subservient to these

purposes is by material impulse. The mode in which a man is made subservient is by inducement and persuasion. But both are equally the affair of necessity. The man differs from the knife as the iron candlestick differs from the brass one; he has one more way of being acted upon. This additional way in man is motive, in the candlestick it is magnetism." Such is the natural and avowed consequence of the doctrine, that virtue consists in utility. It necessarily implies that mere material objects may be really virtuous; and some material objects may have more virtue than the most benevolent of the human race. And this is an idea as repugnant to every dictate of common sense, as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

2. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that virtue may be predicated of the mere animal creation. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, administer largely to our comfort and support. And if virtue consists in utility, it may be predicated of these, and of every thing that has the least portion of life and sensation. But is it in the power of our minds to conceive that creatures which are totally destitute of moral discernment, and which cannot distinguish between right and wrong, are nevertheless capable of doing moral actions, which are worthy of praise or blame? Can the bare beneficial tendency of their actions render them virtuous? Was there any moral virtue in the gaggling of the geese, which saved the city of Rome from destruction? It is no less absurd to ascribe virtue to the utility of animals, than to ascribe virtue to a refreshing shower, or a fruitful field.

3. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that men may be virtuous, without any intention to do good. They certainly may be very useful, without having utility in view. Their actions may have a natural tendency to promote useful and important designs, which they had no thought or intention of promoting. When Jesse sent David to see and comfort his brethren in the army, he had no thought of raising him to the throne of Israel, and, in that way, of promoting the general welfare of the nation. Men are every day performing actions which have a tendency to promote that public good which lies beyond all their views and intentions. But let any man, or any body of men, do ever so much good while they have no intention of doing it, and the tendency of their conduct will not render it in the least degree virtuous. It is contrary to the dictates of every man's conscience, to place the virtue of an action in its utility, or bare tendency to promote happiness. He cannot, if he tries, separate the virtue of an action from the intention of the agent. But the doctrine under consideration, places all virtue in the tendency of an action,

and not in the intention of the actor. This is the very inference which Godwin himself draws from his own principle. In estimating the morality of actions he says, "The turning point is *utility*. *Intention* is of no farther value than as it leads to utility." This is stripping moral virtue of every moral quality, which is a gross absurdity.

4. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that men may be virtuous in acting, not only without any intention, but from a positively bad intention. If the virtue of an action consists altogether in its tendency, it may be as virtuous when it flows from a bad intention, as when it flows from a good intention, or from no intention at all. The intention of an agent does not alter the tendency of his action. A man may do that from a good intention, which has a tendency to do evil; or he may do that from a bad intention, which has a tendency to do good. Some actions done from the worst intentions, have been the most beneficial to mankind. Joseph's brethren were extremely malevolent in selling him into Egypt; but their malevolent conduct promoted the dignity and happiness of Joseph, the preservation of their father and family, as well as the general good of the Egyptians and surrounding nations. The perfidy of Judas in betraying his Master was a malevolent action; but that action, however malignant in its nature, was in its tendency infinitely beneficial to the whole world. If then utility be the essence of virtue, the conduct of Judas and of Joseph's brethren was highly meritorious and virtuous. But can any man of moral discernment discover any moral virtue in those malevolent actions? The conscience of a heathen would condemn them. Seneca, in his Morals, has a chapter upon the nature of virtue, in which he maintains that virtue consists in the intention of the agent to do good, and not in the utility of his actions. And he illustrates this by a very pertinent and striking example. He says a certain man stabbed another in his side, with an intention to kill him, but the wound, instead of proving fatal, opened an abscess and proved the occasion of saving his life. Upon this he remarks, that the man who stabbed his enemy was as criminal as if he had perpetrated the murder he intended. With this opinion all mankind concur; for they never fail to condemn any action as criminal which appears to proceed from a bad intention, whatever may be its tendency to promote either individual or public good. But perhaps it may be here objected that no malevolent action has a natural or direct tendency to promote happiness, though it may be overruled to produce a good effect; and in such a case the indirect tendency of an action cannot constitute it virtuous. Be it so, that no malevolent action has a natural or

direct tendency to promote happiness; yet if virtue consists in utility, the good effect of a malevolent action is just as virtuous as the good effect of a benevolent one. For the doctrine we are considering places all virtue in the tendency of an action, and not in the intention of the agent. And upon this principle, it is wholly immaterial whether the agent has no intention, a good intention, or a bad intention. If tendency alone determines the moral quality of actions, then the most malevolent ones, when overruled for good, may be the most virtuous. Hence the notion that virtue consists in utility, necessarily carries in it this palpable absurdity: that men may be truly and eminently virtuous in their most malevolent conduct.

5. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is nothing right nor wrong in the nature of things, but that virtue and vice depend entirely upon mere accidental and mutable circumstances. There are certain relations which men bear to each other, and which they bear to their Creator, which create obligations that never can be violated without committing a moral crime. One man is always bound to love another as himself, and it is always wrong to violate this obligation. It is always right that men should love God supremely, and it is always wrong to hate such an infinitely amiable and glorious Being. Right and wrong in these cases does not depend in the least measure upon circumstances. No circumstances can render it right for one man to feel or express malevolence towards another, nor for any created being to feel or express enmity against God. There are innumerable instances in which the duty of moral agents depends upon the nature of things, and in all such instances it cannot be altered by any change of circumstances. But if the essence of virtue consists in utility, it will necessarily follow that any thing which is right to-day may be wrong to-morrow; or any thing which is right in one situation may be wrong in another. A man may think to-day, under present circumstances, it will be for the general good to preserve his neighbor's life, and this will be his duty; but to-morrow, circumstances may be so altered, that he may think it will be for the general good to take away the life of his neighbor, and this will then be his duty. But it is perfectly absurd to suppose that it can ever be right, under any circumstances, to commit murder. This inference so naturally and necessarily results from the doctrine that virtue consists in utility, that Godwin is constrained, though with apparent reluctance, to own that it is right, in some cases, to do that which is wrong in the nature of things. He makes this concession in regard to lying: "Wherever a great and manifest evil arises from disclosing the truth, and that evil appears to be greater

than the evil to arise from violating in this instance the general barrier of human confidence and virtue, there the obligation of sincerity is suspended." This concession applies with equal force to theft, robbery, perjury, murder, and every atrocious action which is absolutely wrong in the nature of things. Whoever admits that virtue consists in utility, must avow this absurd consequence: that there is no essential and immutable difference between virtue and vice. Or in other words, he must admit that the highest malevolence towards God and man may be as amiable and virtuous in one situation, as the highest benevolence in another; and that it is the duty (if there be any such thing as duty,) of every man to exercise the one or the other, according to the circumstances in which he finds himself placed; which palpably contradicts every principle of morality.

6. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is nothing in the universe intrinsically good or evil, but happiness and misery. This idea is so necessarily contained in Godwin's notion of virtue, that he undertakes to state it with peculiar accuracy and precision. "Evil is a term which differs from pain only as it has a more comprehensive meaning. It may be defined to signify whatever is painful in itself, or is connected with pain as an antecedent is connected with its consequent. Thus explained, it appears that a thing not immediately painful may be evil, but in a somewhat improper and imperfect sense. It bears the name of evil not on its own account. Nothing is evil in the fullest sense but pain. To this it may be added, that pain is always evil. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, constitute the whole ultimate subject of moral inquiry. There is nothing desirable but the obtaining of the one, and the avoiding of the other. All the researches of human imagination cannot add a single article to this summary of good." But pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, are so far from constituting the whole ultimate object of moral inquiry, that they do not constitute the least part of it. Moral inquiry properly embraces only virtue and vice, or moral good and moral evil, in distinction from natural good and natural evil, or mere pleasure and pain. If there were no moral good in virtue, nor moral evil in vice, then there would be no propriety in using the word moral in any case, or making any distinction between the kinds of good and evil. But if there be an intrinsic excellence in virtue, which is worthy of praise, and an intrinsic turpitude in vice, which is worthy of blame, then there is a propriety in distinguishing moral good and evil from natural pleasure and pain. Now that there is such a distinction between things moral and natural, is intuitively evident to every reflecting mind. Every man clearly

discerns an intrinsic good in virtue, which he cannot discern in happiness; and an intrinsic evil in vice, which he cannot discern in misery. He feels praise-worthy for benevolence, but not for happiness; and he feels blame-worthy for malevolence, but not for pain or misery. Agreeably to these moral feelings, sound divines have maintained that virtue is to be loved for its own sake, and sin hated for its own sake; and also that God is to be loved for what he is in himself, and not merely for the happiness he enjoys or bestows. But to suppose that pleasure is the only good, and pain the only evil, in the universe, is to suppose, that could the universe enjoy as much happiness without holiness as with it, the universal reign of sin would be as desirable as the universal reign of righteousness. This is totally repugnant to every feeling of benevolence, and to every dictate of that moral faculty by which we judge of moral things.

7. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is really no such thing as either virtue or vice in the world. If the actions of free agents are either good or evil, solely on account of their tendency to promote either pleasure or pain, then nothing can be predicated of them but advantage or disadvantage. Actions which promote happiness may be denominated advantageous, but not virtuous; and actions which produce misery may be denominated disadvantageous, but not vicious. For there is no virtue in the tendency of an action to do good, aside from the intention of the agent; and there is no criminality in the tendency of an action to do hurt, aside from the intention of the agent. Hence it necessarily follows that if there be any virtue or vice in an action, it must consist not in its tendency to produce pleasure or pain, but in the pleasure or pain which it actually produces. But we all intuitively know that there is no more virtue in happiness than in misery, and no more criminality in misery than in happiness. So that if virtue and vice do not consist in the intention of the agent, they cannot be found in human actions. But the doctrine that virtue consists in utility, excludes it entirely from the intention of the agent, which does in reality exclude it from the universe. And thus this doctrine terminates in the greatest of all moral absurdities. But yet,

III. Men are greatly exposed to embrace it. This the apostle plainly intimates, by exhorting Timothy to withdraw himself from those who "supposed that gain is godliness." If that young minister was exposed to imbibe the absurd sentiment that virtue consists in utility, we may naturally conclude that there is still danger of men's falling into this great delusion. Their danger arises from various causes.

1. From the resemblance which this error bears to the truth, though it be diametrically opposite to it. Those who maintain that virtue consists in utility, represent it under the alluring name of universal philanthropy, which is an imposing appellation. They pretend that happiness is the supreme good, and virtue solely consists in promoting it to the highest degree. They insinuate that this philanthropy directly tends to diffuse universal happiness, and to raise human nature to a state of perfection in this life. Such a representation is extremely agreeable to mankind, who are ardently seeking after temporal felicity, and directly calculated to draw them into the belief that virtue consists in utility, which looks like the doctrine that Paul taught in opposition to the heretics mentioned in the text. They supposed "that *gain is godliness;*" but he contradicted them by immediately asserting "that godliness, with contentment, is great gain." To say that gain is godliness, is to say that utility is virtue; but to say that godliness is gain, is to say that virtue produces utility. There is an essential difference between these two doctrines. The one supposes that gain is the supreme good, but the other supposes that godliness is the supreme good. The one supposes there is an intrinsic excellence in gain only; but the other supposes there is an intrinsic and supreme excellence in godliness. The one supposes it is our duty to seek happiness supremely; but the other supposes it is our duty to make godliness the supreme object of pursuit. But since gain is more agreeable to the human heart than godliness, there is great danger that men will embrace the erroneous sentiment that virtue consists in utility, and duty consists in seeking happiness rather than holiness.

2. The danger will appear greater, if we consider by whom this pleasing and plausible error is disseminated. It is taught by grave divines, in their moral and religious treatises and public discourses. Law and Paley have been mentioned as placing the whole of virtue in utility. Dr. Brown, in his remarks upon the Earl of Shaftsbury's Characteristics, maintains that virtue consists in its *tendency* to promote individual happiness. And there are many in this country among the clergy, who believe and teach the same sentiment. These divines, however, do not mean to carry the doctrine that virtue consists in utility so far as they might carry it, or so far as it is actually carried by modern infidels. But when they have once advanced the principle, their readers and hearers may, if they please, draw the natural inferences from it, and carry it into all its destructive consequences.

Many who call themselves moral philosophers, though really skeptics, are warmly engaged in spreading this first principle of

infidelity. Hume led the way, and has been followed by many English, French and German philosophers. The main object of these licentious writers is, to establish the point that gain is godliness; that utility is virtue; that whatever ultimately promotes happiness is right; or to use their own favorite expression, that "the end sanctifies the means."* Their acute and sophistical reasoning is directly calculated to bewilder and corrupt the minds of those minute philosophers who wish to go out of the common road of thinking, and free themselves from all religious and moral obligation.

There is another set of men, who do more by their tongues than divines and moralists can do by their pens, to corrupt the sentiments of the populace. These are seducers, who employ all their eloquence in displaying the utility of virtue, and the happy effects of universal philanthropy. They endeavor to make every one believe that virtue solely consists in utility; that it is his duty to do all in his power to revolutionize the world, to promote the perfectibility of men, and to bring on a state of perfect liberty and equality, as fast as possible. Such seducers are travelling all over the world, and are often to be found in this country, using all their art and subtilty to deceive and beguile the unwary and unguarded.

While so many men of different characters, professions and designs, unite their influence to spread the same plausible and palatable sentiment, there is certainly great danger that multitudes will, either designedly or undesignedly, renounce the pure opinions in which they have been educated, and embrace this first principle of infidelity. For,

3. There is a strong propensity in human nature to believe any other scheme of moral and religious sentiments, than that which is according to godliness. Men naturally love happiness, and as naturally hate holiness. If it be plausibly and confidently asserted that gain is godliness, or utility virtue, according to the fashionable system of morality, those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will greedily imbibe the sentiment. This is more agreeable to the natural heart than any other doctrine that can be inculcated. And when it comes recommended by divines, by politicians, and by professed moral philosophers, as well as by more artful seducers, who is not exposed to fall into the agreeable delusion? Error always finds a friend in a corrupt heart, and men are more apt to believe according to the feelings of the heart, than according to the dictates of the understanding. On this account they are

* See Robinson's Proofs of a Conspiracy, and Barruel's History of Jacobinism, through the whole.

continually exposed to reject the truth, and embrace an error which strikes at the foundation of all moral, religious and political obligation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the people in this country are exposed to embrace the absurd notion that virtue consists in utility, then there is great danger of their renouncing all religion, and becoming avowed infidels. Those who believe that "gain is godliness," or that virtue consists in utility, can easily and fairly reason themselves into the grossest infidelity. Upon this principle, there can be no necessity nor even propriety of any revelation from heaven. This Godwin means to make appear through his whole treatise on political justice. And his reasoning in some places is not only plausible, but just and conclusive. He argues thus: If virtue consists in utility, then every man ought to judge for himself what action or course of conduct will promote the greatest good, without being laid under any human or divine restraint. Hence he sets aside what he calls a *popular* principle. "A comprehensive maxim which has been laid down upon the subject of duty is, 'that we should love our neighbor as ourselves.' But this maxim, though possessing considerable merit as a popular principle, is not modelled with the strictness of philosophical accuracy." That is, the second great commandment in the divine law is not consistent with a higher and better principle, that virtue consists in utility. He goes on afterwards to deny the propriety of men's being subjected to any rule of duty besides their own sense of rectitude. He says, "To a rational being there can be but one rule of conduct, justice — and one mode of ascertaining that rule — *the exercise of his understanding*." This is a full denial of all revelation; and those who once believe the doctrine that virtue consists in utility, will naturally draw the same conclusion from it. It is an infidel sentiment, and directly leads to infidelity. It lately spread through a large nation, where it turned them into infidels, and subverted all their religious orders and institutions. If it should prevail in this country, it will undoubtedly produce the same deplorable effects here that it did in France, and deprive the nation in general of that glorious gospel which they have so long enjoyed. The present prospect is alarming. Various causes are concurring to spread this first principle of infidelity among us. It is inculcated in the most sophistical and pleasing manner in books of divinity, of morality, of history and politics. These publications are circulated among all classes of people, at great expense and with

peculiar art and industry. They are read openly by the bold and profligate, and in private by the young and timid. The same sentiment which these dangerous writings contain and diffuse, is greatly propagated by those secret societies which have lately increased beyond all example. They highly applaud and recommend universal philanthropy, and draw multitudes into the brotherhood, by this pleasing principle. The leaven also has begun to spread and operate among many in the learned professions, who throw in all their weight and influence to carry on the delusion. While these various causes are coöperating with increasing force, to proselyte the nation to the first principle of infidelity, is there not great danger of its eradicating from their minds those sound principles of piety and morality in which they have been better educated than any other people on earth? It is undoubtedly true that this absurd and ensnaring doctrine is spreading as fast among us, as ever it did in any part of Europe. It was about fifty years in coming to maturity and producing its full effects in France. And in less than that time, if the eyes of people here be not opened, and their fears alarmed, they may lose all their religious principles and privileges, and sink down into the darkness and horrors of infidelity.

2. If our nation are exposed to embrace the absurd and pernicious doctrine that virtue consists in utility, then they are in great danger of losing all their civil as well as religious institutions. The same licentious principle which strikes at the foundation of all religion and morality, equally tends to subvert all good government. It is impossible to bind men by civil authority, after they have lost all sense of religious and moral obligation. The same doctrine that leads a people into infidelity, so far tends to throw them into anarchy and confusion. This the disorganizers in France knew, and therefore the first step they took to subvert their civil government was to propagate the doctrine which had a direct tendency to destroy all religion and morality. If the absurd sentiment we have been considering should lead the American people into infidelity, it will in that way indirectly serve to weaken and overturn our government. But this is not all; for it has a direct as well as indirect tendency to destroy all civil order and authority. It operates as directly and forcibly against all human, as against all divine laws. This Godwin makes appear, by reasoning fairly upon it, and applying it to the fundamental principles of all civil government.

He infers from it that promises and oaths of allegiance are not binding upon mankind. Hear his reasoning: "When I enter into an engagement, I engage for that which is in its own

nature conducive to human happiness, or which is not so. Can my engagement always render that which was before injurious, agreeable to, and that which was beneficial, the opposite of duty? Previously to my entering into a promise, there was something which I ought to promise, and something which I ought not. Previously to my entering into a promise, all modes of action were not indifferent. Nay, the very opposite to this is true. Every conceivable mode of action has its appropriate tendency and shade of tendency to benefit, or to mischief, and consequently its appropriate claim to be performed or avoided. Thus clearly does it appear that promises and compacts are not the foundation of morality." He adds, "promises are absolutely considered an evil, and stand in opposition to the genuine and wholesome exercise of an intellectual nature." As to oaths of allegiance, he says, "When a promise or an oath is imposed upon me superfluously, as is always the case with promises of allegiance; or when I am compelled to make it by the operation of a penalty, the treatment I suffer is atrociously unjust, and of consequence the breach of such a promise is peculiarly susceptible of apology. A promise of allegiance is a declaration that I approve the existing constitution of things, and, so far as it is binding, an engagement that I will continue to support that constitution. But I shall support it for as long a time and in as great a degree as I approve of it, without needing the intervention of a promise. It will be my duty not to undertake its destruction by precipitate and unpromising means, for a much greater reason than can be deduced from any promise I have made. An engagement for any thing farther than this, is both immoral and absurd; it is an engagement to a nonentity, a constitution; a promise that I will abstain from doing that which I believe to be beneficial to my fellow-citizens." Upon treaties he observes: "Treaties of alliance are in all cases wrong; in the first place, because all absolute promises are wrong, and neither individuals nor bodies of men ought to preclude themselves from the benefit of future improvement and deliberation."

Another inference he draws from his absurd notion of virtue is, that all human laws are unjust and tyrannical. He demands, "Who is it that has authority to make laws? What are the characteristics of that man or body of men, in whom the tremendous faculty is invested, of prescribing to the rest of the community what they are to perform and what avoid? The answer to these questions is exceedingly simple: Legislation, as it has been usually understood, is not an affair of human competence." Again he asserts: "Law tends, no less than creeds, catechisms and tests, to fix the human mind in a stagnant

condition, and to substitute a principle of permanence, in the room of that unceasing perfectibility which is the only salubrious element of mind."

Arguing from the same principle, he denies that there ought to be any such thing as punishment in human society, because it cannot conduce to general utility. "Thus it appears," says he, "whether we enter philosophically into the principle of human action or merely analyse the ideas of rectitude and justice which have the universal consent of mankind, that, accurately speaking, there is no such thing as desert. It cannot be just that we should inflict suffering on any man, except so far as it tends to good. Hence it follows, that the strict acceptation of the word punishment by no means accords with any sound principles of reasoning."

He carries his disorganizing principle still farther, and infers from it, that all civil government ought to be totally annihilated. He says, "The language of reason on this subject is—Give us equality and justice, but no constitution. Suffer us to follow without restraint the dictates of our own judgment, and to change our forms of social order as fast as we improve in understanding and knowledge." He anticipates such a state of things, and exults in the glorious prospect. "With what delight must every well informed friend of mankind look forward to the auspicious period, *the dissolution of political government*, of that brute engine, which has been the perennial cause of the vices of mankind, and which, as has abundantly appeared in the progress of the present work, has mischiefs of various sorts incorporated with its substance, and no otherwise to be removed than by its utter annihilation!"

Thus Godwin himself illustrates the natural tendency of his disorganizing principle, and clearly shows that its practical operation is to strip all promises, oaths, and treaties of their moral obligation, and all human laws and institutions of their civil sanctions. It is the most disorganizing principle in nature, and cannot fail to ruin any people who embrace it. Its present appearance and prevalence among us is extremely threatening. And unless it can be checked and restrained in its progress, it will prepare the whole nation to burst all the bands of morality, religion and government, and involve us in anarchy and destruction.

3. We learn from what has been said, why those who believe that virtue consists in utility are so much given to change. It is the natural tendency of this loose and absurd sentiment to produce this effect in all who govern their conduct by it. For, according to this principle, there is no immutable rule of right, but every man is left to act just as he happens to think best, in

his present situation. He may change his opinions, and alter his conduct every day in the year, and every hour in the day. He may promise, and break his promise, as often as he pleases. He may betray his friends, or murder his enemies, or overturn the government, if circumstances admit or require it. There is nothing too bad to be done upon the principle of universal philanthropy. Accordingly we find that those who have adopted this licentious sentiment have discovered remarkable mutability and fickleness in their opinions and practice. Rousseau, with all his splendid talents, was as unstable as water. At one time he ridiculed and opposed the Bible; but at another time, he wrote in favor of Christianity, and painted the character of its divine Author in the most amiable and glowing colors. Voltaire professed to be a christian in one place, but a deist in another. In health, he despised and blasphemed every thing sacred and divine; but in sickness and death, he trembled in the view of eternal and invisible realities. Bonaparte could be a Roman catholic, or an infidel, or a mussulman, just as places and circumstances required. He could overturn all religious institutions, and then establish them. He could dethrone one pope, and then raise up another. He could swear everlasting hatred to monarchy, and then proclaim himself emperor of the French. Do we not see the same instability in some of our American politicians? and may we not ascribe it to the same cause? Have they not imbibed the principle of universal philanthropy, which allows them to pierce the breasts of their rivals, to undermine a constitution which they have sworn to support, to turn into any shape, and act any part to gain popularity and power? How deplorable would our situation be, if the majority of our rulers should deem it political justice, or an act of duty, to break their promises, to betray their trusts, and to throw off all divine and human restraints!

4. Since so many, at this day, are exposed to embrace the absurd and destructive sentiment that virtue consists in utility, we have peculiar reason to be thankful for the Bible which God has put into our hands, and which is an infallible rule of faith and practice. In this respect, we are more highly favored than the people of France, when they were led astray by corrupt and artful sophisters. The Bible was generally locked up from them; but to us it constantly lies open for our daily perusal and instruction. And if we impartially consult it, we may discover and avoid every fatal error, however plausibly taught and recommended. The present state of things ought to endear divine revelation to us, and induce us to esteem it in some measure according to its infinite importance. It is, at this critical juncture of affairs, the grand palladium not only of our

religion and virtue, but of all our civil rights and privileges. It is by this medium, if by any, that we must detect, oppose and restrain those errors, which are coming in like a flood, and threaten to ruin us. Unless we adhere to this sacred guide, and the sound principles in which we have been educated, we cannot save ourselves from the fatal errors and delusions of this untoward generation. But if we withdraw ourselves from such as teach and propagate error, and use all proper means to make their folly manifest, there is ground to hope that truth will prevail, and corrupters be defeated and disappointed. Let us be as zealous in circulating good books, as seducers are in circulating bad ones. Let us take as much pains to diffuse good sentiments, as corrupters do in sowing the seeds of error and delusion. Let parents give their children a pious education, and guard them against the prevailing errors of the times. Let instructers in schools, academies and higher seats of learning, admonish their pupils of their danger, and teach them the pure principles of morality, religion and good government. Let ministers of the gospel contend earnestly for that faith which is so violently attacked, and which they are set to defend against all gainsayers. In a word, let all men of piety, knowledge and influence, unite their exertions to suppress the progress of every demoralizing and disorganizing principle. And if we really feel and express that gratitude which we owe to God for the innumerable benefits we have derived from our civil and religious institutions, it will constrain us to preserve them, by promoting that true godliness which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE JOY OF A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. — 2 Cor., i. 12.

Paul begins this epistle with an account of the trials and conflicts that he and other apostles had experienced in Asia, as an apology for not coming to the church in Corinth before, as he had given them some ground to expect. He assures them that he had always meant to act conscientiously, and had done so in not paying them a visit as he intended and intimated. He says: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward." He here seriously declares, that he had not delayed coming to them from sinister or worldly motives, but from pure, christian, gracious motives, which his conscience approved, and which he could reflect upon with joy and satisfaction. Such simplicity and godly sincerity is common to all true believers. And this warrants me to say that christians have reason to rejoice, when their conscience testifies in favor of their conduct. I shall show,

I. When christians have the testimony of their conscience in favor of their conduct; and

II. That they have reason to rejoice, when they have this testimony in their favor.

I. We are to consider when christians have the testimony of conscience in their favor. Though it may be supposed to

be difficult to give a just and accurate definition of conscience, yet every man knows that it is something distinct from reason, and every other faculty of the mind. It is conscience which enables men to distinguish right from wrong, or moral good from moral evil. It is conscience which teaches them their moral obligation to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong. And it is conscience which approves them for doing right, and condemns them for doing wrong. It is this faculty in the breast of christians which testifies in their favor when they do right, but condemns them when they do wrong. The question now before us is — when do christians have the testimony of conscience in their favor?

The apostle had the testimony of conscience in his favor, and all christians sometimes have the testimony of conscience in their favor. But when does conscience testify in their favor? I answer,

1. When it testifies that they have done what is right. It is always right that they should do "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report." And when they do any or all these things, they always have the testimony of conscience in their favor, that they have done what is right. Conscience always knows and approves what is right, in itself considered; and as all men sometimes do what is right, in itself considered, so all men sometimes have the testimony of conscience so far in their favor. Accordingly, we find all men professing to act conscientiously, sometimes and in some things; and we have no reason to scruple the sincerity of their profession. But though conscience approves of all men for doing what is right in itself considered, yet this is but a partial approbation, and consistent with the highest disapprobation. This leads me to observe,

2. That christians have the full testimony of conscience in their favor, when it testifies not only that they have done right, but have done right from right motives. It is the proper office of conscience to judge, not only whether christians do what is really right, but whether in doing what is really right they act from proper motives. Christians may do a great many things that are right from wrong motives; but conscience never approves of their acting from wrong motives. The apostles rejoiced in having the testimony of conscience that they had acted from right, and not from wrong motives. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." They acted

from benevolent, and not from selfish motives; they acted from heavenly, not from worldly motives; they acted from grace, and not from nature; they acted to please God, and not themselves. For acting from these pure and holy motives, their conscience approved and applauded them, though the world despised and opposed them for it. All real christians sometimes act from the same noble and virtuous motives; and whenever they do, they have the testimony of their conscience in their favor, that they have lived and acted in christian simplicity and godly sincerity. I now proceed to show,

II. That this testimony of conscience in their favor affords them good ground to rejoice.

1. Because it assures them that they have internally, as well as externally obeyed God. All real christians have that love, which is the fulfilling of the law. The divine law primarily requires the heart, and external actions only as expressions of the heart. The first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." And the second is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. God requires every person, in every precept, to obey him from a holy, benevolent heart. He never requires any external action to be done separately from pure, holy love. None who are in the state of nature ever act from this true love to God and man. They have not the love of God in them. They are under the entire dominion of a sinful and selfish heart, which is not obedience to but a transgression of the law of God. They have not, nor can they have the testimony of conscience, that they have ever internally obeyed God in a single instance. God has shed abroad his love in the hearts of real christians, who delight in his law after the inward man. They not only do the actions which God requires, but do them from pure and proper motives. When conscience is allowed to do its office, it makes the same distinction between external and internal obedience, that the divine law does. It approves of internal obedience, but disapproves of external obedience, which does not flow from internal obedience. Unrenewed men seldom allow conscience to do its whole office; that is, to judge what manner of spirit they are of, but only to judge what manner of actions they perform. They are satisfied, if conscience testifies that they act in external conformity to the divine law, though their hearts are far from God. But real christians habitually allow conscience to do its whole office, and judge of their hearts, as well as of their actions, which flow from their hearts; and it gives them no satisfaction to have conscience testify in favor

of their external conduct, unless it testifies also in favor of the christian simplicity and godly sincerity of their internal views and intentions. Conscience is as ready to approve of right motives of action, as to condemn wrong ones. Whenever christians impartially consult conscience, it never fails to approve of whatever they do from pure and benevolent motives. So long, therefore, as they keep their hearts with all diligence, and do what is internally as well as externally right, they have the approbation of conscience, which affords them a just and solid ground to rejoice, which all the world cannot take away. David says, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them," or destroy their peace. And it was a proverb in Israel: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." As the reproach of conscience is extremely painful, so the approbation of conscience is extremely pleasant and joyful. And it is peculiar to christians to have the approbation of conscience, which is a permanent source of joy and consolation, both in prosperity and adversity, because it affords them infallible evidence that they have done their duty.

2. Christians have reason to rejoice when their conscience testifies in their favor, because it affords them infallible evidence that they have the approbation of God. Conscience is God's vicegerent in every human breast, and always says the same things that God says. It approves of what God approves, and condemns what God condemns. When christians feel and act as their conscience dictates and approves, they may know that God approves their views and conduct, and that their hearts are right in his sight. And it is only by the testimony of their approving conscience, that they can possibly know that they are at peace with God, as well as with themselves. Unless their conscience approves of their heart, they cannot know that God approves of it. Accordingly, the apostle directs christians to determine whether they have the approbation of God, by determining whether they have the approbation of their own conscience. He says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." When the conscience of christians testifies, or bears witness in their favor, that they have the spirit of adoption, that is, a holy, filial, dutiful spirit, then they may certainly conclude that they are the sons of God, and stand entitled to the everlasting favor and enjoyment of God. When conscience approves

of the heart, it is an infallible evidence that God approves of it; or when the heart and conscience unite their testimony in the favor of christians, they have the highest evidence that they are the children and heirs of God. No witness of the Spirit without the witness of conscience, can give christians an infallible evidence that they have the approbation of their heavenly Father; but when their conscience approves of their heart, they may certainly know that he approves of them. Hence says the apostle John, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." This peace of conscience which christians enjoy, stands inseparably connected with peace with God, which is a source of peculiar joy and satisfaction. David esteemed the favor of God as the source of peculiar joy. "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." Again he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." And again he says to God, "Thy favor is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life." The apostle says to christians, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And he joins himself with christians in saying, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

3. Christians have reason to rejoice when their conscience bears testimony in their favor, because it affords them infallible evidence that they will sooner or later meet the approbation of all the world. Christ forewarned his faithful followers that the world would disapprove, reproach and oppose them, for acting conscientiously in the discharge of their duty. And they have always found that his precaution was proper, and his prediction true. The men of the world disapprove of christians more for doing right than for doing wrong; more for obeying than disobeying their conscience. The men of the world are not displeased with christians for conforming to the world, but for not conforming to the world, and for practically condemning the customs, manners and practices of the world. Christians feel themselves bound to obey the dictates of their own conscience,

rather than to regard the frowns or flattery of the enemies of truth. But their conscience, which dictates and approves their righteous conduct, assures them that they shall sooner or later meet the approbation, not only of God, but of man. All men carry in their breast a conscience as well as christians, and their conscience approves of what is right in christians, as well as what is right in themselves. And though their conscience be now defiled and blinded by the moral corruption of the heart, yet it will eventually be awakened to do its office in condemning themselves and approving of christians. This has been verified in a thousand particular instances. Individuals who have disapproved and condemned christians for acting agreeably to their conscience, have afterwards, if not at the time, inwardly approved of their conduct. That which one man's conscience approves, the conscience of every man in the world will approve, when he has a fair and impartial view of it. Whatever the conscience of christians approves in them, all the world will approve, when it is clearly exhibited before them. Job acted conscientiously, for which his friends and enemies condemned him; but finally every eye that saw him and every ear that heard him, blessed him; and those who complained of him most, were constrained to justify him and condemn themselves. Saul hated and opposed David for acting uprightly, according to the dictates of his own conscience; but his conscience constrained him to approve of his integrity and kindness to him. Joseph's brethren hated and abused him for acting according to his own conscience; but when their conscience was awakened to do its office, it justified him and condemned themselves. Paul knew that his conscience approved of his preaching as he did, and therefore he confidently believed that the conscience of his hearers approved of it. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." When the conscience of christians testifies in favor of their character and conduct, they may be assured that their character and conduct will be approved sooner or later by all mankind, and by the whole intelligent universe. And is not this a solid ground for their rejoicing always and without ceasing? I may add,

4. That they have good reason to rejoice when their conscience testifies in their favor, because it affords them an infallible evidence that they stand entitled to all the blessings of eternal life. Since their conscience testifies that they love God, it equally testifies that God loves them; and since it testifies that

God loves them, it equally testifies that they are his children and heirs of eternal life. And to be assured of eternal life, is the broadest and firmest ground of joy unspeakable and full of glory. Accordingly we find that the primitive christians, who had the testimony of their conscience in their favor, did actually rejoice in the full assurance of hope, that they stood entitled to all the blessedness of the heavenly world. Hear them express their joyful hopes and prospects. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Peter thanks God for the same joyful hopes and prospects of christians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. — Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith — might be found unto praise, and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." While christians have the testimony of conscience in their favor, they have all the promises of God in their favor. Hence says the apostle, this is our rejoicing, that is, the primary source of all our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience that we have acted from christian simplicity and godly sincerity.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If christians have the testimony of their conscience in their favor; then they may always know their gracious state. They have the spirit of adoption, and their conscience witnesses with their spirit of adoption, that they are really the children of God. The primitive christians carried in their breasts an infallible

witness that they were the subjects of saving grace. They say in the text, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Their conscience testified that they had acted not from fleshly wisdom or wordly motives, but had acted in simplicity and godly sincerity from gracious motives. Their conscience gave them infallible evidence that they possessed the grace of God in truth. And all real christians carry about with them the same infallible witness that they are in a state of grace. They have a spirit of grace, or a gracious spirit; and their conscience witnesses with their spirit of grace that they are born of God, and are his children. There is scarcely any religious subject which has been involved in more darkness or obscurity, than that which has been called *the mystery of sanctification.* This has led many to imagine that christians know that they are in a renewed and sanctified state in some mysterious manner which cannot be intelligibly explained. They suppose that the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, reveals to them, either immediately or by some passage of scripture, that they have passed from death unto life, and experienced a saving change. But it appears from what has been said, that it is the testimony of conscience, that they have received the fruit of the Spirit, which gives them the only true and infallible evidence that they are born of the Spirit, and are the children of God. The fruit of the Spirit is love, a filial love to God, which the conscience testifies is saving grace. Christians are required to know that they have passed from death unto life. And this is a reasonable requisition, because they are capable of knowing this, and may know it, if they impartially consult conscience, which will always tell them the truth on this subject. The apostle Peter exhorts christians to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure." And the apostle Paul says to christians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves. Know ye not your ownselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you," that is, the spirit of Christ, "except ye be reprobates?" Every christian is to blame, if he does not know that he is in a gracious state. His ignorance is always owing to negligence. He has the witness in himself, and may know it, if he would only seriously and impartially consult his conscience, which stands ready to testify in his favor. But here you will ask, Does not conscience testify against christians? I answer, it does testify against their sinful exercises, but in favor of their holy ones. And this approbation of their holy exercises is an infallible evidence that they are in a state of grace; but the disapprobation of their sinful exercises is no

counter evidence that they are not in a state of grace. It is only an evidence of their moral imperfection, which will cleave to them as long as they live in this world. Though Peter's conscience testified that he was extremely criminal in denying his Master, yet it equally testified that he loved Christ supremely. For when Christ put the question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" the testimony of his conscience enabled him to say in simplicity and godly sincerity, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Though christians may and ought to mourn and weep bitterly as Peter did, when their conscience condemns them for dishonoring Christ, yet they may rejoice, when conscience testifies that they love him supremely. Real christians have no right to walk in darkness and go mourning all the day long, through fear that they are not christians. Their duty is to consult the testimony of conscience; "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world." And this is true, and ought to make them rejoice.

2. If conscience will always testify to christians what is right if they consult it, then they may always know their duty. Conscience is always an infallible guide respecting duty, when it is properly consulted. There are a vast many plain cases of duty which conscience imperceptibly dictates, without any deliberate or formal consultation. But there are not a few dark, doubtful, or difficult cases of duty, when christians find themselves in need of a sure guide. In all such cases, they may infallibly know their duty, if they sincerely desire and impartially seek to know it. Their conscience is always with them, and able and ready to direct them if they will only properly consult it. Paul would not have thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus, if he had duly consulted his conscience. Christ exhibited infallible evidence that he was the promised Messiah; and had Paul consulted his conscience while reading the predictions concerning Christ in the Old Testament, it would have convinced him that he ought not to have viewed him as an impostor, and opposed him as such. Or if he had consulted conscience when he heard Stephen's dying discourse, he would not have thought that he ought to aid and countenance the persecutors of that sincere follower of Christ. He was, as he afterwards found himself to be, highly criminal in not knowing his duty in respect to Christ and his sincere followers. Christians, as well as others, frequently say that they wish to know their duty in certain cases, but cannot determine what it is. Sometimes they cannot determine whether it is their duty to attend to public wor-

ship. Sometimes they cannot determine whether it is their duty to relieve an object of charity. And sometimes they cannot determine whether it is their duty to promote an object of public utility and importance. They find a great many such difficult cases, in which they cannot discover their duty. But this is a great mistake. For if they would only sincerely desire to know their duty and impartially consult conscience, it would dictate their duty and remove their difficulty. It is their duty either to act, or not to act in all such cases, and conscience would infallibly decide the question, if they would properly seek its guidance and direction. As a general rule, it is the duty of christians to do what is the most self-denying. And this is the principal reason why they are so negligent and reluctant to consult conscience. For conscience always bears testimony against all selfishness, and in favor of true self-denial, or disinterested benevolence. The truth is, christians always may, and consequently ought, to know their duty. They are always to blame if they do not consult conscience in difficult cases, or if they act contrary to its infallible dictates.

3. If the conscience of christians approves of them for doing their duty, then they live the happiest life of any men in the world. The testimony of their conscience in their favor affords the purest, the highest, and most permanent source of happiness. This source of happiness is peculiar to real christians, who alone enjoy it. The men of the world, amidst all their worldly possessions, hopes and enjoyments, never have the approbation of conscience; for though they do many things that are right, yet they never do any thing from right motives. They never act in christian simplicity and godly sincerity, but with fleshly wisdom, and from selfish and sinister motives, which their conscience, when it does its office, always disapproves and condemns. But all real christians do those things which are not only externally, but internally, right; for which they have the approbation of conscience, and the approbation of God, and expect to have, and shall have, the approbation of the whole intelligent creation. And what can be a source of higher and purer satisfaction and self-enjoyment than this, under all circumstances of life, whether prosperous or adverse? All real christians may adopt the language of the text. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we have acted with christian simplicity and godly sincerity, which affords us that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. But are there any other men that can justly adopt this language? Can they say from their own experience that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace? and that in keeping God's commandments there is

great delight? Can they say that their conscience ever testified to their godly sincerity and gracious motives in any thing they have ever done? Do they ever derive comfort, consolation and joy, in reflecting upon their inward views, desires and designs, more than in reflecting upon their external conduct? Or does not a critical examination of the real motives of their external conduct always weaken and diminish their comfort and satisfaction, rather than increase it? It was the pure, sincere, godly motives of their conduct, that afforded the primitive christians the solid and permanent ground of their joy and rejoicing. And this is true in respect to all real christians at this day. The approbation of their conscience affords them a source of joy and self-enjoyment, that all the men of the world are destitute of, and strangers to. Though they often suffer more evils and trials than the men of the world, still it is true that they enjoy more happiness. The approbation of conscience gives them more solid peace and real felicity than the men of the world can or do ever derive from the approbation of ignorant and partial admirers of their apparent virtue and prosperity. For their conscience tells them that if their admirers only knew their internal views and motives of conduct, they would despise and contemn them. But it is not so with real christians whom the world despise; for they have the testimony of conscience that the world would approve them, if they only knew their internal views and motives of action. And this makes them feel very indifferent whether the world applaud or reproach them. At least, the apostle Paul felt so; for he says to the Corinthians, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

4. If the conscience of christians always approves of all their christian simplicity and godly sincerity in acting, then they never need to be afraid to do their duty. Though they may often expect to meet with the frowns of the world in doing their duty, yet so long as they enjoy the approbation of conscience and the approbation of God, they need not fear the disapprobation of the world; for they enjoy that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. They may always assure themselves that they shall be more happy in doing their duty than in neglecting it; and that the more constantly and faithfully they do their duty, the more they shall promote their happiness, both in time and in eternity. This the primitive christians believed, and acted accordingly. The testimony of their own conscience gave them courage and resolution to pursue the path of duty, through the most formidable difficulties, trials and dangers. And they enjoined it upon all the followers of Christ to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the

Lord, forasmuch as they knew that their labor should not be in vain in the Lord. And the apostle Peter put the question to their conscience: "Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" Christians have a peculiar and endearing motive to do their duty, notwithstanding all the frowns and flatteries of the world: I mean the motive of their own present, future, and eternal happiness. The approbation of their conscience assures them of the approbation of God, and the final approbation, not only of all good men, but of all bad men. The fear of man bringeth a snare, and good men are entangled in this snare oftener, perhaps, than in any other in the world. They are extremely apt to fear losing the favor, as well as incurring the displeasure of the enemies of the gospel. Peter denied his Master through fear of his enemies. And Paul tells him that he had dissembled in preaching the gospel, through fear of those who heard him. How often do christians neglect some of the duties which they owe to God and man, through a servile fear of those whom they ought not to fear! And how often do they neglect the duty which they owe to one another, through fear of meeting the disapprobation of those whose approbation they ought to have! How often do they fear the disapprobation of their fellow men, more than the disapprobation of their own conscience! This is a groundless as well as a sinful fear. It destroys their present and future peace. If they wish to be happy and rejoice, let them secure the approbation of their own conscience in doing their duty. There is an inseparable and infallible connection between duty and happiness, which cannot be destroyed. Happiness is to be enjoyed in the faithful discharge of duty, and the more faithful christians are in doing their duty, the more happy they will finally and for ever be.

5. If the conscience of christians testifies in their favor when they do their duty, then it as faithfully testifies against all their short comings, and criminal deficiences, and moral imperfections. The conscience of christians is far more apt to do its office than the conscience of sinners. They forbid it to speak; but christians more or less allow and invite it to speak, in reproof as well as in approbation. And to this it is owing that christians are vastly more burdened with sin than the men of the world. They silence their conscience as much as possible, lest it should disturb their groundless peace. But christians desire to know what is wrong, as well as what is right, in their hearts and conduct. For they have the same simplicity and godly sincerity in repenting of their neglect, as in performing their duty. They sincerely desire to know what manner of spirit they are of, and pray to God to search and try them. For

they know that if they regard iniquity in their hearts, the Lord will not hear their prayers nor approve their conduct.

6. If conscience approve of actions that are right in themselves when they are done in christian simplicity and godly sincerity, but does not approve of any external actions which flow from fleshly wisdom and selfish and sinful motives, then we may discover the great source of self-deception in sinners. They consult conscience only in respect to their external conduct, which is often right and amiable, simply considered, and such as conscience says is right; and from this they conclude that they have the approbation of conscience, which gives them peace, and lulls them in the most dangerous security. In this way Saul justified himself when Samuel condemned him. In this way the amiable young man in the gospel justified himself, in saying that he had kept all the divine commands. In this way Paul made himself believe that touching the law he was altogether blameless. In this way all the Scribes and Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. And in this same way sinners endeavor to make their conscience speak in their favor, by judging partially in respect to their external conduct, while their internal views and motives are not submitted to the infallible decision of that faithful judge. We hear all descriptions of men of the world speak of doing their duty, as much as christians, though they never did an act of duty in their life. This is self-deception, because sinners do not mean to hear the truth from their conscience, nor from any other quarter. They are blindly pursuing the path to ruin. This is infinitely dangerous. They are entreated to hear and obey the infallible dictates of conscience. Conscience will sooner or later speak, and divide them from the righteous, and make them take their proper place.

PART V.

THE REVEALED CHARACTER OF GOD.

SERMONS XIV.—XVIII.

SERMON XIV.

AFFECTIONS ESSENTIAL TO THE MORAL PERFECTION OF THE DEITY.

For God is love. — 1 John, iv. 8.

While Simonides resided at the court of Syracuse, the king had the curiosity to ask him — What is God? The poet desired a day to consider the question; on the morrow he requested two days; and as often as he was called upon for an answer, he doubled the time. At length the king grew impatient, and demanded the reason of his conduct. It is, replied Simonides, because the more I consider the question, the more obscure it seems. Though creatures cannot comprehend the essence of their Creator, yet they may form some clear and just conceptions of his great and amiable attributes. The text exhibits the brightest part of his character. "God is love." This is a just and full description of his moral perfections. His holiness, justice, goodness and mercy, are but so many modifications of divine love. But in order to understand the full import of the text, we must still farther inquire what is meant by love, when ascribed to an absolutely perfect and immutable being. Here analogy is our only guide. We are obliged in this case to reason from love in man to love in the Deity. We all know by experience that love belongs to the heart, and not to the intellect. This naturally leads us to conclude that love in the Deity denotes a moral, and not an intellectual exercise, or that it belongs to his heart, and not to his understanding. Hence the declaration in the text that "God is love," plainly supposes that God is possessed of affections.

This doctrine needs both illustration and proof.

Many suppose that all propensities, inclinations, dispositions or affections are incompatible with the perfection of the divine nature. Some eminent divines, as well as metaphysicians, maintain this opinion; in which they seem to approach nearer to the sentiments of Epicurus, than to those of the sacred writers. Epicurus said, "The Deity could neither be influenced by favor, nor resentment; because such a being must be weak and frail; and also, that all fear of the power and anger of God should be banished, because anger and affection are inconsistent with the nature of a happy and immortal being." But in direct opposition to this sentiment, our doctrine is, that God has real and proper affections; that he is pleased with some objects, and displeased with others; that he feels and exercises love, pity, compassion, and every affection which can flow from perfect benevolence.

It must, however, be observed that God is a pure Spirit, who has no affections which resemble those bodily instincts and passions which are to be found in the present state of human nature. The best of men here on earth, carry about with them some remains of selfishness, pride, envy and other sinful passions. But God is perfect love, and all his affections are pure and clear as the crystal stream. There is a foundation for fear, and faith, and hope, and confidence, in the very nature of finite, dependent beings; but there is no foundation for these affections in the Supreme Being, whose power and knowledge are independent and unlimited. God is infinitely above all instincts, passions, or affections, which proceed from either natural or moral imperfection. These, therefore, we ought never to ascribe to the Deity.

Having briefly explained the doctrine of divine affections, I proceed to offer several considerations in support of it.

1. Benevolent affections form the moral beauty of the divine character. God is love. In this alone consists his moral excellence. His independence, almighty power and unerring wisdom, are mere natural perfections; but his benevolent feelings are moral beauties. Benevolence appears virtuous and amiable in any moral agent. It is the highest ornament of angels and men, and the supreme glory of the Supreme Being. No natural excellences can supply the place of benevolent feelings. This clearly appears in the case of the fallen angels. They still retain all the noble powers and faculties with which they were created; but having lost their original benevolent feelings, they are become the most odious and detestable creatures in the universe. And could we only suppose that the divine being were totally divested of all these affections which flow from universal benevolence, we could not discover a single trait of

moral beauty in his moral character. A malevolent being of infinite power and knowledge would appear infinitely odious and terrible. And only take away all benevolent feelings from the Deity, and he would necessarily appear in this light to all intelligent creatures. We have, therefore, just as much reason to believe that God is possessed of affections, as we have to believe that he is possessed of any moral beauty or excellence.

2. Men are required to imitate their heavenly Father. This plainly supposes that there is something in the kind Parent of the universe which may be imitated. But the power, wisdom, and all the natural perfections of the Deity, are above imitation. There is nothing in the nature of God which any of his creatures can imitate, except his benevolent feelings. These are imitable, and these he calls upon mankind to imitate. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Agreeably to this, the apostle says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." Our Saviour also strongly inculcates the same duty: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Here Christ first requires men to imitate God, and then points out the proper way to imitate him; which is to feel as he feels, or to exercise the same tender and benevolent affections which he exercises in the course of his common providence. It appears, therefore, from both the nature and exposition of this divine command, that true and proper affections do really exist in the divine mind. Besides,

3. The scriptures ascribe affections to God in the most plain and unequivocal terms. We often read of the *heart* of God; which means neither his power, nor wisdom, nor any natural perfection, but his kind and benevolent feelings. This is the proper sense of the word heart, and in this sense God uses it in application to himself. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." The scripture often speaks of God's being *pleased* and *delighted*. This plainly supposes that he is possessed of affections, which

are the highest source of mental enjoyment. We read, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." We are told, "The prayer of the upright is his delight." And God himself declared by a voice from heaven at the baptism of Christ, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." These representations are agreeable to our natural conception of him, who is God over all, blessed for ever. We farthermore find a great variety of particular affections ascribed to the Deity. To him is ascribed love: "God is love." To him is ascribed joy: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save thee, he will rejoice over thee with joy." To him is ascribed pity: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." To him is ascribed zeal: "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." To him is ascribed anger: "The Lord is angry with the wicked every day." To him is ascribed vengeance: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." In a word, we find every virtuous affection, that is, every affection which can flow from pure benevolence, ascribed to God in scripture. It appears, therefore, from revelation as well as from reason, that God is possessed of affections. But notwithstanding the plain and positive evidence in favor of this doctrine, it may be proper to take notice of some things which may be said against it.

1. It may be said that the passages which ascribe affections to God are figurative, and ought not to be taken in a literal sense.

This objection is more specious than solid. We are never to depart from the literal sense of scripture, without some apparent necessity. If any passage will bear a literal sense, we ought to take it literally, unless the nature of the subject or the connection of the words, or some other texts of scripture, require a figurative meaning. When God is represented as having bodily members, such as eyes, ears, hands, or feet, the dictates of reason and the general tenor of scripture oblige us to understand the expressions in a figurative sense. But when God is said to have love, joy, pity, and all other benevolent affections, there is no occasion for departing from the plain and literal sense of the words. For such affections are neither contrary to the nature of things, nor to the nature and character of an absolutely perfect being. By all the just rules of interpretation, therefore, we are constrained to understand the passages which ascribe affections to God, in their plain, obvious, literal sense.

2. It may be said that affections are painful, and consequently cannot belong to God, who is perfectly happy.

It is true, affections are always painful when they cannot be

gratified; and this is often the case among mankind. Sometimes their affections give them pain because they want the power to attain the objects of their desire; and sometimes because their desires are so selfish and inconsistent, that if they gratify one of their affections, they must necessarily mortify another. But since all the affections of the Deity are only different modifications of pure, disinterested benevolence, they admit of a constant and perfect gratification; and since he is able with infinite ease to attain every desirable object, his affections are always gratified, and always afford him a source of complete and permanent felicity. But,

3. It may be asked, "How is this notion of divine affections compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity, which all divines ascribed to the Deity? By the same act, say they, he sees the past, present and future. His love and hatred, his mercy and justice, are one individual operation. He is entire in every point of space; and complete in every instant of duration. No succession, no change, no acquisition, no diminution. What he is implies not in it any shadow of distinction or diversity."

The subtile objector himself gives the following reply. "Though it be allowed that Deity possesses attributes of which we have no conception, yet ought we never to ascribe to him any attributes which are absolutely incompatible with that intelligent nature essential to him. A mind whose acts and sentiments and ideas are not distinct and successive, one that is wholly simple, and totally immutable, is a mind which has no thought, no reason, no will, no sentiment, no love, no hatred; or, in a word, is no mind at all. It is an abuse of terms to give it that appellation; and we may as well speak of limited extension without figure, or of numbers without composition." Whatever this author might have intended by this answer, it appears very pertinent and conclusive.

But we may farther observe here, that there is a plain distinction between such a mutability as does, and such a mutability as does not, imply imperfection. If God were to change his purposes or designs, this would be a blemish in his character; because this would imply a want of either power, or wisdom, or goodness. And if he should change his affections without any change in the object of them, this would also discover imperfection, and prove that his affections were wrong either before or after he changed them. If a man should love a person to-day and hate him to-morrow, or if he should hate a person to-day and love him to-morrow, without any alteration in the person's character, this would manifest a fickle and sinful disposition. But God is subject to no such mutability

as has been mentioned. He never changes his purposes or designs; because these were formed under the influence of perfect goodness and unerring wisdom. Nor does he ever change his affections, unless the objects of them change; and in that case to change his affections argues no imperfection. If a man who was a sinner yesterday, becomes a saint to-day, it implies no imperfection in God to change his affections towards that person, and love him to-day whom he abhorred yesterday. The doctrine of divine affections, therefore, supposes no mutability in the Supreme Being but what is a beauty and perfection in his character.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject may give us some faint conceptions of the strength and ardency of the divine affections. God is infinite in all his attributes. His moral perfections bear a just proportion to his natural perfections. All his feelings are infinitely strong. His love is omnipotent love; his wrath is omnipotent wrath. The inspired writers, therefore, seize the boldest images in nature, to display the beauty and strength and terror of the divine affections. By the love of the bridegroom to the bride, they represent the love of God to his people. "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." By the pity of a father to his children, they represent the pity of God to the afflicted. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." By the fondness of a mother for the infant of her womb, they represent the compassion of God to his church. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." How terrible is the wrath of the furious beasts of prey! Yet their wrath is but a faint image of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God toward the wicked. "Therefore I will be unto them, saith the Lord, as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and I will rend the caul of their hearts, and there will I devour them like a lion." God loves and hates with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength. There is something infinitely amiable and awful in the divine affections.

2. In the view of this subject we may discover what it was which moved God to the work of creation. It is generally and justly supposed that God was perfectly blessed in the enjoyment of himself from all eternity; but perfect blessedness seems to exclude all motive to action. Why should a being move,

who has nothing to gain by moving? Why should a being act, who has nothing to gain by acting? Why should a being exert himself, who has nothing to gain by his exertions? What then could move God, who was perfectly happy before the foundation of the world, to bring it into existence? This difficulty will immediately vanish, if we only consider the source of the divine blessedness. God is love, and all his happiness flows from the perfect gratification of all his benevolent feelings. But these could never have been completely gratified without displaying all his perfections in the work of creation. God being from eternity all-sufficient and infinitely benevolent, must have had an infinitely strong propensity to exert his omnipotent power in the production of holiness and happiness. Hence it was morally impossible that he should have been perfectly blessed, without devising and performing the work of creation. The doctrine of divine affections, therefore, clearly shows us not only that God might have had *some motive* to create the world, but also that his own enjoyment, felicity, or blessedness, *was that motive.*

3. It appears from what has been said, that God is pleased with the existence of every thing which takes place in the universe. His heart is in all his works. He feels interested in all events. And we know that the stronger the affections of any being are, the more pain and distress he feels whenever they are crossed or disappointed. If, therefore, all things do not take place just as the Deity desired and intended, his infinitely strong desires and affections are deeply wounded. But it is the universal voice of scripture, as well as the dictate of reason, that God is infinitely above the reach of pain, and enjoys the most perfect and permanent felicity. Though, therefore, there are ten thousand things constantly taking place in the world which are in their own nature disagreeable to the Deity, yet there never did and never will one single event exist, which, all things considered, he did not choose and intend should actually exist.

4. This subject suggests matter of great consolation to those who are interested in the divine favor. God hath set them as a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm. Though their love may wax cold, yet his love will never cease; though they may forget him, yet he will never forget them. He will keep them in the hollow of his hand, and guard them as the apple of his eye. He will cause all things to work together for their good. He will raise them as high in holiness and happiness as infinite power, wisdom and goodness can raise them. With what joy and transport, therefore, may they look up to God and say, whom have we in heaven but thee?

and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee. Thy favor is life, and thy loving kindness is better than life!

5. This subject warns sinners to flee from the wrath to come. God is angry with the wicked every day, and his wrath continually abides upon them. And though he now waits to be gracious to them, and endures them with much long-suffering and patience, yet, unless they repent and become cordially reconciled to him, he will whet his glittering sword, and his hand will take hold on judgment, and he will give them a just recompense of reward. It will be a terrible thing for sinners to fall into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire, and whose wrath will burn to the lowest hell. But God is now seated on a throne of grace. "Let the wicked," therefore, "forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

SERMON XV.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

Thou art good, and doest good. — Psalm cxix 68.

David was early and intimately acquainted with God. From his youth he delighted to contemplate upon the works and ways of God, and to trace all secondary causes to the first and supreme cause. While he watched his flocks by night, and surveyed the shining orbs above, his pious heart led him to exclaim in the language of joy and praise, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work." He had an eye to see God in the works of providence, as well as in the works of creation. And the longer he observed the divine conduct towards himself and towards the rest of mankind, the more he was convinced of the goodness of God. He was able to say from his own experience and observation, in his nearest approach to God, "Thou art good, and doest good." The plain import of these words is,

That God's goodness moves him to do good. I shall,

I. Describe the goodness of God; and,

II. Show that it moves him to do good.

I. The first thing is to describe the goodness of God.

Goodness is the same in God as in man. In man it comprises every amiable, moral quality of the heart, and signifies the same as general benevolence, which is the essence of every virtuous or holy affection. There are benevolent and selfish affections; goodness consists in benevolent affections, and badness in selfish ones. God is love, and all his goodness consists in love; which is something entirely distinct from his power, or knowledge, or any other natural perfection. It is his heart.

Goodness in every moral being lies in his heart, and consists in benevolent affections. But though the goodness of God lies in his heart, and consists in benevolent affections, yet, in various respects, it is superior to the goodness of all other beings. For,

1. His goodness is absolutely pure, and free from every thing of a selfish or sinful nature. Though some men are really good in this life, yet their goodness is mixed with a great deal of evil. Their benevolent affections do not flow in a constant, uninterrupted stream; but are often obstructed by unholy and unfriendly affections. They do not always feel the same love to God, nor the same love to man. Their hearts are composed of discordant and diametrically opposite exercises. Their goodness is like the morning cloud and early dew, which soon vanisheth away. But the goodness of God is constant, uninterrupted, and entirely free from every discordant affection. No selfish feeling ever existed in his heart. His heart is all goodness, and full of holy, kind, and benevolent affections. He is in scripture called the Holy One. His holiness consists in his goodness, and his goodness is without the least alloy, or impure mixture of unholiness, unrighteousness, injustice, or malevolence.

2. His goodness is not only pure, but permanent. The immutability of his goodness results from the immutability of his existence and natural attributes. His existence is immutable, because it is necessary and independent; and his power, knowledge, and wisdom are equally independent and necessary. And since his existence and all his natural attributes are immutable, we cannot see any cause or reason for any change in his goodness. All created beings are dependent in respect to their existence, and all their natural powers and faculties; therefore we can easily conceive that after they have possessed pure goodness, they may become partially or totally destitute of it. There is nothing incredible in the account we have of the angels, who kept not their first estate. Though they were created perfectly holy and good, yet they might lose their perfect goodness, and become entirely sinful. There is nothing incredible in the first apostacy of our first parents. Though they were formed in the moral image of their Maker, and were possessed of a pure heart, yet they were dependent for the continuance, as well as for the first existence of their moral rectitude. But we cannot conceive of any thing either without or within a self-existent and independent Being that should be a cause of intercepting, diminishing or destroying his goodness. We may therefore justly conclude that his goodness is permanent and immutable as his existence. David expressly declares that his goodness is unchangeable and everlasting. In the

hundred and thirty-sixth psalm, he devoutly and gratefully cries, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." And he repeats the declaration more than twenty-five times in this psalm. In the fifty-second psalm, he expressly asserts, "The goodness of God endureth continually." And to the friends of God he says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." His faithfulness cannot fail, because his goodness cannot fail; and both are permanent and immutable, as his necessary and eternal existence.

3. His goodness is universal, as well as pure and permanent. The goodness of men and angels is limited. It cannot extend any farther than their knowledge extends; and their knowledge is very imperfect. But God's knowledge is universal and unbounded. He knows himself and all his creatures, whether rational or irrational, and regards them all with a benevolent and impartial eye. He is good to the just and to the unjust, and to the meanest creature in the air, the earth, and the ocean. He is good to the fowls of heaven, the beasts of the earth, the fish of the sea, and to every living creature. He sees them all at one intuitive, comprehensive view, and feels truly benevolent to them all. He is, strictly speaking, "good unto all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." He stands in the same relation to all his creatures, and feels the same kind and benevolent affections towards them all. His goodness pervades and fills the universe.

4. His goodness is perfect in degree, as well as in purity, permanency, and universality. His goodness bears proportion to all his other attributes. His benevolent feelings as much surpass the benevolent feelings of any or all of his creatures, as his power, his knowledge, and his wisdom surpass theirs. He loves with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength. In this respect there is none good but God. His goodness, in point of strength and ardor, is infinitely superior to the goodness of any benevolent creature in the universe. Yea, there is a greater amount of goodness in one exercise of his benevolence, than in all the benevolent feelings of all benevolent creatures, through every period of their existence. He loves his creatures infinitely more than they ever did, or ever will love him, or one another. I now proceed to show,

II. That the goodness of God moves him to do good. The psalmist ascribes the goodness of his conduct to the goodness of his heart. "Thou art good, and doest good." It is the heart that moves every intelligent being to act. A good heart

cannot fail to move a good being to do good. We have shown that God is a good being, and his heart governs all the other perfections of his nature, and lays him under a moral necessity of employing all his knowledge, wisdom and power to gratify his benevolent desires. Though the heathen philosophers, and many other learned men, have been ready to imagine that an eternal, independent, and perfectly happy being would have no possible motive to act, or produce any effect, yet it is much easier to conceive of his activity than of his inactivity. Goodness, or pure benevolence, is the most active principle in nature. We cannot conceive that an infinitely powerful and intelligent being, possessed of perfect benevolence, should never employ his wisdom and power to answer any benevolent purpose; or how God should exist from eternity to eternity, without displaying his great and glorious attributes in doing good. This then leads me to observe,

1. The goodness of God must have moved him to form, before the foundation of the world, the best possible method of doing the greatest possible good. His goodness must have moved him to employ his wisdom in the best possible manner. And it is the proper province of wisdom to form wise designs; that is, to devise the best ends, and the best means to accomplish them. The wisdom of God enabled him to discover, among all possible modes of doing good, that which was absolutely the best, and his perfect goodness disposed him to adopt that best mode of operation. Divine goodness laid the divine Being under a moral necessity of forming all his purposes of doing good as early as possible. When he saw what was best for him to do, he was morally obliged to do it; and he could no more neglect to determine to do all that his infinite wisdom saw best to be done, than he could cease to be perfectly wise and good. Not to determine to do the greatest good when he clearly saw what it was, would have been inconsistent with his perfect rectitude. As the goodness of God must have moved him to act, so it must have moved him to determine to act in the wisest and best manner, or to do the greatest good. There being no defect in his wisdom, nor in his goodness, nor in his power, these perfections united must have moved him to devise, fix and determine, the best possible way of doing the greatest good. It was impossible for God who was perfectly wise and good, to devise and adopt a plan of operation, which was not the best that could be devised and adopted. For the least defect or imperfection in the divine purposes would argue a natural or moral defect in his character. So that we may safely conclude that the perfect, immutable, and universal goodness of God did actually move him to devise and adopt the

best possible method of doing the greatest possible good, before the foundation of the world.

2. The perfect goodness of God must have moved him to bring into existence the best possible system of intelligent creatures. It must have moved him to give existence to the best number of beings. The number could not be infinite, but must be limited. And in the limitation, there was room for the display of perfect wisdom and goodness, to devise and fix upon the best possible number. He must have fixed the exact number of angels, of men, and of animals, as well as the exact number of the heavenly luminaries and material objects. He must have determined what variety there should be in the natural and moral qualities of the moral system to make it the most perfect. And he must have determined to make just such a natural and moral world as he has actually made.

3. The goodness of God continually moves him to exert his power and wisdom in governing all his creatures and all his works in the wisest and best manner. His perfect goodness makes him the most active being in the universe. He is neither weary nor faint. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He constantly does all that is necessary for him to do, in order to govern the whole creation in the wisest and best manner. He is actively concerned in all the good that is done in every part of the universe. He guides the hands and hearts of all his creatures in all the good they do, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Notwithstanding the stupidity, ingratitude and disobedience of multitudes of his intelligent creatures, his goodness prompts him to pour down the blessings of his providence upon them in constant and copious streams. He satisfies the desires of every living creature, and fills the mouths of all mankind with food and gladness. He bestows as many and as great favors upon this sinful world as it is morally possible for him to bestow. He treats every individual creature as well as the good of his great system will allow. His impartial goodness leads him to regard the whole more than a part, and to govern individuals in subserviency to the good of his whole family in heaven and on earth. Though the goodness of God moved him to do great good in the works of creation, yet it has moved him to do unspeakably more good in the works of providence. He has been doing good every moment in every part of the universe for nearly six thousand years; nor is there a rational or irrational creature that has ever existed, but has felt the influence of his universal and constant goodness. But it may be farther observed,

4. That the perfect goodness of God must move him to make the intelligent universe as holy and happy as possible,

through the interminable ages of eternity. He will do as much good to his creatures as it is possible in the nature of things that he should do. His power and wisdom will always be under the influence of his permanent, immutable and universal goodness. He will never be less able, or less disposed to do good in time to come, than in time past. He has formed the best plan to do good for ever, and he is able to do all the good that he has determined to do from eternity. He has all his creatures under his eye and under his control, and will employ them all to promote the general good of the universe. God can no more cease to do good than he can cease to be good; and he can no more cease to be good than he can cease to exist. The good he has done bears no more proportion to the good he will do, than time bears proportion to eternity. He means to make all his goodness pass before the eyes of all his intelligent creatures. Angels and men will be as capable of enjoying holiness and happiness after the end of the world as they were before; and God will be as able and as much disposed to make them holy and happy after that period as before; therefore, as long as his boundless power and goodness remain, we may be certain they will be incessantly and perpetually employed in augmenting the holiness and happiness of the blessed inhabitants of heaven. And who can conceive to what a height of felicity God can and will raise the objects of his complacency and delight, in future and eternal ages? Thus it appears from the nature and permanency of divine goodness, that God must make the intelligent universe as holy and happy as their natures will admit, through every period of their interminable existence. This important and consoling truth is not supported by fine spun reasonings, but is demonstrated by the immutability of the existence and perfections of God.

I now proceed to the improvement of the subject, and observe,

1. The goodness of God is discoverable by the light of nature. It is a question which has been frequently and earnestly agitated, whether the goodness of God can be discovered by the works of God, without his word. But if God be not only good, but does good, then we may fairly conclude that his goodness may be discovered by his works alone, without the aid of divine revelation. It is a common and infallible maxim, that actions speak louder than words. The goodness of men is more clearly and certainly discovered by their conduct than by their declarations. It is true that detached parts of their conduct may be ambiguous or doubtful, and their actions may appear better than they are; but this is because we cannot always know from what motives they act. But taking the whole

of their conduct together, it affords the highest evidence we can have of their goodness, certainly much higher than any declarations they can make. But if it be true that God is good, and his goodness governs all his conduct, then his conduct is the highest possible evidence of his perfect goodness. His word is only an evidence of his goodness after his goodness has been demonstrated by his works. After we have demonstrated that God is good by his works, then we know that he speaks the truth in his word when he declares that he is good; but before we have demonstrated by his works that he is good, we cannot know that he speaks the truth when he tells us in his word that he is good. It is not only true that the goodness of God may be discovered by his works, but it is true that his goodness cannot be discovered in any other way, either in this world or in the world to come. For, if the evils in this world be an argument against his goodness, greater evils in another world will be stronger arguments against it. It is said by those who deny that the goodness of God can be discovered by his works in this world, that we do not know how he will treat mankind in a future state without the aid of the Bible; he may, notwithstanding his apparent goodness towards them in this life, annihilate them or make them perfectly miserable. But we cannot know the contrary to this merely by his word; for though he has promised to make some of them happy, yet we cannot know that he will fulfil his promise without knowing by his works that he is perfectly and immutably good. The works of God, therefore, afford us the first and most infallible evidence that God is good. Accordingly, the apostle asserts that all the nations of the earth may discover the goodness of God by his works, and are inexcusable if they do not. He says, "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them;" that is, the heathen, "for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." It is not for want of evidence in the works of God that the pagan world have not discovered the being and goodness of the only living and true God, but because of their moral depravity and their criminal stupidity arising from it. All men might discover the goodness of God which he is daily and constantly acting out before them, if they would critically and impartially attend to his works, which afford the highest possible evidence he can give them of his goodness, either in this life or the next.

2. If God always acts under the influence of pure, permanent, universal and perfect goodness, then all the objections

that ever have been made, or ever can be made, against any part of his conduct, are objections against his goodness, which must be altogether unreasonable and absurd. Our eyes must be evil, if we object against God because he is good. But if we object against any part of his conduct, we object against his goodness; for whatever he has done, he has been moved to do by his pure and perfect goodness. It is as certain that his whole conduct is good, as that his whole heart is good. So that we cannot object against a single instance of his conduct, without virtually objecting against his goodness. This will appear if we distinctly consider any objections we have ever formed against any part of his conduct.

If we object against his forming any or all of his purposes from eternity, we object against his goodness; for his goodness required him to form his purposes as soon as his perfections enabled him to form them, or as soon as he knew what was best for him to do. But his essential knowledge enabled him to know what was best for him to do from eternity; and when he knew this, he could not consistently with his perfect knowledge and goodness delay forming all his purposes, because there could be no reason for his delaying; and to delay without reason must have been contrary to his perfect rectitude. He acted under the influence of his perfect goodness in forming his purposes from eternity, and in forming just such purposes as he did form. We cannot therefore object against his forming his purposes from eternity, nor against any purposes he did then form, without objecting against his goodness; for his whole conduct in forming his purposes was the genuine fruit of his unerring wisdom, guided by his pure, impartial, and universal benevolence, which ought to be loved and approved by every intelligent creature.

If we object against God's conduct in placing Adam as the public head of mankind, and suspending their moral character upon the condition of his perfect obedience, we object against his goodness, which moved him to place Adam and his posterity in such a critical and dangerous state. God might have determined that each individual of the human race should have been placed as the angels were, without any public head whose single act should so deeply affect millions and millions of others. But his perfect goodness moved him to appoint Adam to be the public head of all his posterity, that by one man's disobedience many should be made sinners. And since divine goodness determined this important event we cannot have the least reason to object against it.

If we object against God's agency in governing the hearts and conduct of mankind in the manner he does, we object

against his goodness. For every act of his government is an act of pure goodness, which seeks the highest good of the universe. He could, if he pleased, make every one of mankind act entirely right, and prevent every one from acting wrong; and it is owing to his goodness that he does not govern the moral world in this manner. He could have prevented all natural and moral evil from coming into the world if he had pleased; and he could now banish all natural and moral evil from the world if he pleased. But his perfect and universal goodness moves him to overrule both natural and moral evil for the benefit of the universe; and who can object against it without objecting against his goodness?

If we object against his saving one person and destroying another, according to his original purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, we object against his goodness. For it was pure, perfect benevolence, which moved him to form all his purposes of special grace. If we only admit the perfect goodness of God, and believe that he always has acted, and always will act under the influence of it, it will be impossible for any of mankind, or for any other intelligent creatures, to see the least ground to object against a single instance of God's conduct in forming and executing his original and eternal purposes. The plain and important truth that God is perfectly and immutably good, and always acts under the influence of perfect goodness, solves all the apparent darkness and difficulties in both the natural and moral world, and completely removes the ground of every objection that ever has been, or ever can be made against the conduct of God in any of his works of creation, or providence, or redemption.

3. If God always acts under the influence of his pure, permanent, universal goodness, then no creature in the universe ever has had, or ever will have any just cause to murmur or complain under the dispensations of providence. Though mankind are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, and though God does inflict many and great evils upon the children of men, yet he never afflicts willingly, or grieves them. It is only when affliction is necessary, or some good end may be answered by it. He treats all his creatures as well as it is morally possible for him to treat them; and with this, every one ought to be completely satisfied. All men have constant occasion to rejoice that the Lord reigneth, and that their times are in his holy and benevolent hands. This good men have believed, and they have acted accordingly. Who ever suffered greater, more complicated and more unexpected calamities than Job? But in the depth of his afflictions he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He

viewed all his sufferings as coming from the wisdom and goodness of God, which repressed every murmuring thought, and produced cordial and unreserved submission. And the primitive christians lived in the lively faith of the perfect goodness of God in all the dealings of his providence towards them, which gave them entire satisfaction under all the evils they suffered. They could sincerely say of themselves, "As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." The paternal goodness of God is a perpetual source of consolation to all his children, while they are passing through all the fiery trials which fall to their lot in this present evil world. When God's ancient people complained that his ways were not equal, he appeals to their own consciences to justify his conduct and condemn their own. "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" God fills the earth with his goodness, and acts it out in every dispensation of his providence towards every individual of the human race, which ought to remove every murmur and complaint, fill every heart with gratitude and every mouth with praise. Hence says the apostle to every one, with great propriety, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice."

4. If God be universally and perfectly good, and always acts under the influence of his immutable and perfect goodness, then it is owing to the knowledge, and not to the ignorance of sinners, that they hate God. They are called haters of God, and are said to have a carnal mind which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Some ascribe all their enmity and opposition to God to their ignorance of his true character. They say no man can know the great and amiable character of God, and at the same time hate him. This would be true if their hearts were holy and benevolent; but their hearts are entirely selfish, and selfishness is diametrically opposite to pure, holy, perfect benevolence. And therefore the more they know of God, the more their hearts rise against him, and hate every part of his character, and every instance of his conduct, rightly understood. Could they see and realize the pure, benevolent motives of his conduct in all instances, they would perfectly hate and oppose all his designs and all his conduct. Could the eyes of all the sinners in the world be opened at once, and they have a clear and full view of his motives in creating and governing all his creatures, they would all rise up in open rebellion against their Maker. This is exemplified by the feelings, and language, and conduct of those, whose eyes God does often open that they may see and realize his sovereign goodness and grace. They are the

persons who hate God the most sensibly, till their carnal mind is slain, and holy love is shed abroad in their hearts. Our Saviour, who knew what was in man, represents sinners as hating God, not because they are ignorant of him, but because they know him. He expressly says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, *They hated me without a cause.*" Sinners hate God for his goodness, which is no just cause for their hating him. Their hearts are evil because he is good. They hate him more for his goodness than for any thing else in his character. They hate his power, knowledge and wisdom, because these natural attributes are under the constant influence of his pure, holy, disinterested benevolence; and of course, the more they know of his natural and moral perfections, the more their carnal mind rises against him.

5. If God be purely, perfectly and universally good, and always acts under the influence of this disposition, then he will display his goodness in the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent. He loves them with the love of benevolence in this world, and desires, simply considered, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life. This he declares under the solemnity of an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And again we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance." As God loves the impenitent in this life with the love of benevolence, so he will always feel benevolently towards them while he manifests towards them the tokens of his everlasting displeasure. His perfect goodness disposes him to hate their perfect wickedness, and to punish them for it. And as it is his goodness that disposes him to punish them, so it will dispose him to punish them for ever. If he punished them from a principle of malevolence and revenge, there could be no evidence that he would punish them for ever. But since his perfect goodness leads him to regard the highest good of the universe, and to oppose whatever is opposed to that, his goodness requires him to punish those who are the opposers of that good, so long as the highest good of the universe renders their punishment necessary. And we can see no reason why the good of the universe should not require their eternal, as well as temporary punishment. God's displeasure towards the finally impenitent will be a holy and benevolent displeasure,

and his goodness turned into wrath will for ever burn to the lowest hell, and give a peculiar intenseness to the miseries of the damned. If they could only see that God punished them in the exercise of a malignant and a revengeful spirit, it would be a great relief to their sorrows; but they will always know and feel that God always acts under the influence of perfect goodness, while he pours out the vials of his wrath upon them, which must serve to sink them deeper and deeper in darkness, misery and despair. The goodness of God, instead of being an argument in favor of universal salvation, affords the strongest argument to prove that, since God punishes sinners in this life, he will punish them for ever, except they repent.

6. If God is purely and perfectly good, and always acts under the influence of his goodness, then those who are finally happy will for ever approve of the divine conduct towards the finally miserable. Some have supposed that the everlasting miseries of the damned would disturb and diminish the happiness of the blessed. And they undoubtedly would, if their miseries did not flow from the perfect goodness of God. But they will see and believe that God displays his goodness in displaying his justice, and this display of goodness and justice will be so far from diminishing their felicity, that it will augment it for ever. Though the blessed will not take pleasure in the mere miseries of the damned, yet they will take pleasure in the pure, impartial and perfect goodness of God, in giving them the due reward of their deeds. Moses and the pious Israelites rejoiced in the goodness of God, which sunk Pharaoh and his hosts in the merciless waves. And we know that the heavenly hosts sing the song of Moses, and say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they behold the smoke of the torments of the damned. And the only reason is, that they see the displays of divine goodness in punishing those who have opposed and always will oppose the glory of God, and the highest good of the universe.

7. If the pure, perfect, immutable goodness of God be consistent with his pure, perfect, immutable justice, then while sinners remain impenitent, they have no ground to rely upon his mere goodness to save them. While God gives them health, and strength, and prosperity, and pours into their bosoms the common blessings of his providence, they are extremely apt to imagine that his goodness will terminate in his special grace, and that after he has done them so much good in this world, he never will inflict everlasting punishment upon them in the world to come. This notion of divine goodness gives them habitual ease and security in the neglect of duty from day to day, and often affords them hope in their last moments. How often do we find those on a sick and dying bed who feel easy and safe, though they have never embraced the gospel! And

if they are asked why they are not distressed about their future and eternal state, they will readily reply, that they hope in the mercy of God to prepare them to die before they leave the world. They cannot believe that a being of infinite goodness will cast them off for ever. But they have no ground to rely upon the mere goodness of God, which may be displayed in their destruction, as well as in their salvation. This is certain from the nature of his goodness, and the displays of it in ten thousand cases. What terrible calamities has he inflicted upon mankind from age to age, in this world! He has once swept away all the inhabitants of it, with the besom of destruction. He burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah, as a prelude to future and everlasting punishment. He has set them forth "for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." What ground then have the dying impenitent to hope that the mere mercy of God will save them in their impenitence and unbelief? The immutable goodness of God will never move him to act contrary to his declarations and original designs, to save an impenitent sinner from endless destruction.

8. If God be purely, permanently, and universally good, then the terms of salvation proposed in his word, are as low and condescending as possible. He requires nothing of sinners but to love his pure and perfect goodness, in order to enjoy it for ever. He declares, "I love them that love me, and those who seek me early shall find me." It is certainly reasonable that those who have hated God without a cause, should love him for his goodness, which is the highest reason for loving any being in the universe. And there is nothing in the way of their loving the pure and perfect benevolence of God, but their present voluntary selfishness. It is only because they love themselves supremely, that they cannot love God supremely, who is infinitely worthy of their supreme affection. If they perish, therefore, they must perish by their own choice, in opposition to that love which would save them. It is their immediate and important duty to turn from sin to holiness, which is only turning from hating to loving God.

9. If God be perfectly and immutably good, then he will cause all things to work together for the good of them that love him. All that he has designed to do and ever will do, will display his goodness, which will be the constant and perpetual source of light, of joy and blessedness to them that love him. Their happiness is as secure as his blessedness, and they will enjoy all good, so far as their natures will admit. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

SERMON XVI.

THE MORAL RECTITUDE OF GOD.

THAT be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?—GENESIS, xviii. 25.

WHEN God was about to destroy Sodom, he appeared to Abraham, and told him his design; this deeply affected the heart of that pious man, who instantly offered the most fervent and importunate cries to the Father of mercies, to spare that corrupt and degenerate city. And the only plea he urged before the supreme Disposer of all events was the rectitude of his own character. "And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham implicitly acknowledged that it would be right for God to punish the guilty who deserved to be punished, but not to punish the innocent who did not deserve to be punished. This leads us to conclude,

That Abraham knew that God is a being of moral rectitude. I shall show,

I. That God is a being of moral rectitude, and

II. Consider how Abraham could know this.

I. I am to show that God is a being of moral rectitude.

To make this appear, it may be observed,

1. That God ought to be a being of moral rectitude.

Though we do not know every thing about God, yet we know something about him. We know that he has an eternal and underived existence, and that he possesses almighty power, perfect knowledge and wisdom, and all the essential attributes of a moral agent. He knows the natures, relations and connections of all beings in the universe. And this knowledge necessarily confers moral obligation. For that which the apostle lays down as a maxim, is an eternal truth: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This applies to the Deity as well as to all other intelligent agents. As God perfectly knows the relation he bears to his creatures, and the relation they bear to him, so he perfectly knows how he ought to treat them, and how they ought to treat him. He knows what is right and wrong respecting his own conduct, and respecting the conduct of all other moral beings in the universe. He ought therefore to feel and act according to his moral discernment of what is right in the nature of things. And as he feels much more sensibly his obligation to moral rectitude than any other being, so we have far more reason to believe that he possesses moral rectitude, than that any other being in the universe does.

2. God claims to be a being of moral rectitude. When Moses requested him to show him his glory, "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Moses says, "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Elihu says, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." David says, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth go before thy face." "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." He is represented as a being of immutable veracity. Balaam under a divine impulse says, "He is not a man that he should lie; neither is he the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" We read of the hope of eternal life, which God, *who cannot lie*, promised before the world began. To give greater security to the heirs of this promise, God confirmed the immutability of his counsel by an oath: "That by two immutable things, in which it was *impossible* for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." In these divine declarations, God claims to be

immutably holy, faithful, righteous, just and good; and these immutable moral attributes constitute the highest possible perfection of moral rectitude.

3. God has made his rational creatures capable of discerning his moral, as well as natural attributes. He has implanted in their minds a moral sense, by which they can distinguish moral beauty from moral deformity in moral characters. But can we suppose that he would have done this, if he knew that his own moral character would not bear examination? He must have known that if his rational creatures should discover any thing in his heart or conduct, which was contrary to moral rectitude, it would dissolve their moral obligation to love his character, to obey his commands, or to submit to his government, and lay them under moral obligation to hate him supremely. For if his heart were evil, he would be the most odious, instead of the most amiable being in the universe. His conduct in making us competent to judge of his moral rectitude is complete evidence of the perfection of his moral rectitude, and confirms his own declarations concerning it in his word.

4. God has not only made us capable of judging of his moral rectitude, but commanded us to do it. "Judge I pray thee, between me and my vineyard." "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? saith the Lord." His knowledge of his own moral perfections is the only ground upon which he can, with propriety, or even safety, appeal to us in respect to his moral rectitude. And since he has made the appeal, it amounts to irresistible evidence of the moral perfection of his nature.

5. God has not only commanded his intelligent creatures to judge of his moral rectitude, but has placed them under the best advantages to judge. He has placed them all in a state of trial, and in different parts of the universe, where they have had great opportunities and strong inclinations to examine his conduct with the strictest scrutiny. All mankind have been in a state of trial in this world; but some have been more tried than others. No men on earth, perhaps, were more severely tried than Abraham and Job. And their peculiar trials led them to examine the hand and heart of God, and to discover, if possible, some injustice or want of goodness in God. But after all their investigations into the divine character and conduct, they were obliged in conscience to proclaim to the world his perfect rectitude in all his dealings towards them. The angels of heaven have had much greater abilities, advantages and opportunities to look into the works and ways of God; but though they have looked with the greatest diligence and attention, yet

they have been constrained to proclaim, in the strongest terms, the perfect rectitude of the divine character and conduct. Isaiah heard the heavenly hosts cry one to another and say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And John says he heard them "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Now if the greatest and best of God's intelligent creatures, after their strictest scrutiny of his conduct in the various parts of the universe, have not been able to discover the least moral defect or imperfection in his character and conduct, we may confidently believe that he possesses the perfection of moral rectitude. And to close this connected train of reasoning, I would observe,

6. That God has appointed a day for the very purpose of giving all his intelligent creatures the best possible opportunity of judging of his moral rectitude. The day of judgment is called the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." At that day God will unfold all his own designs and conduct towards all his intelligent creatures, and their designs and conduct towards him, and towards one another. When all these things shall be exhibited before the minds of the whole intelligent creation, God will give them the best possible opportunity to know with the highest certainty whether he has always felt and acted perfectly right, in the creation, government and redemption of the world. And his prediction of this future day of decision affords the fullest assurance, at present, that he knows the absolute perfection of his own moral rectitude. But though this be a truth of the first importance, and capable of being established by plain, conclusive, irresistible evidence, and has been generally believed in all ages by those who have enjoyed the sacred oracles, yet it may be a question how they came to the knowledge of the moral rectitude of their great Creator and supreme Sovereign. This leads me to consider,

II. How Abraham could know that God is a being of moral rectitude. Here I would observe,

1. That he could not know the moral rectitude of God, by knowing what God would do to promote the highest happiness of the universe. God indeed knew what he had designed to do to promote this great and important object; but he had not told Abraham or any other man what he had actually designed to do. Abraham could not judge of the rectitude of his moral character, by knowing all his purposes respecting the whole intelligent universe. But without knowing all the purposes of God, he well knew that it was not right for him to punish the innocent.

2. Abraham could not know the moral rectitude of God, by knowing that the punishing of the innocent would not promote the highest good of the universe. Though he knew this to be sinful and wrong, yet he could not know that it could not be beneficial in the final result. For he knew that God had, for some reason or other, introduced ten thousand moral evils into the world. And if moral evil committed by men might promote the highest good of the universe, how could he know but that moral evil committed by God might promote the same important purpose? If it should be said that the reason why moral evil committed by men may promote the general good is, because God overrules it to this end, why may it not be said with equal propriety that God may overrule his own moral evil to serve the same purpose? How could Abraham, then, know that it would be inconsistent for God to punish the innocent with the guilty for the purpose of promoting the greatest good of the universe, if he should overrule it for that purpose? But,

3. Though Abraham could not know what would be right or wrong for God to do, either by knowing what had a direct tendency to promote the highest good of the universe, or what had an indirect tendency to promote that great and important object, yet he could know what was right or wrong for God to do to answer any purpose whatever, by knowing that right and wrong or moral good and evil are founded in the nature of things. Moral good, which consists in true benevolence, is morally right in its own nature. And moral evil, which consists in selfishness, is morally wrong in its own nature. This mankind know to be true, not by their reason but by their conscience. Every moral agent has a moral sense, by which he is capable of distinguishing right from wrong, or moral good from moral evil. The child seven years old is as capable of doing this as in any period of his life. The peasant is as capable of doing this as the philosopher, and the pagan as the christian. Benevolence is intrinsically excellent, and deserves to be approved and rewarded. Selfishness is intrinsically evil, and deserves to be condemned and punished. Moral good is essentially the same in every moral agent; and moral evil is essentially the same in every moral agent. It is the moral nature of benevolence that renders it morally excellent; and it is the natural tendency of benevolence to promote happiness that renders it naturally excellent. It is the moral nature of selfishness that renders it morally evil; and it is its natural tendency to promote misery that renders it naturally evil. The nature of benevolence is one thing, and its tendency another. The nature of selfishness is one thing, and its tendency another. The nature of benevolence is immutable, and cannot be altered by the Deity. The

nature of selfishness is immutable, and cannot be altered by the Deity. But the tendency of benevolence, and the tendency of selfishness may be altered. The selfishness of Judas in betraying his master for thirty pieces of silver was a great moral evil in its own nature; but its tendency under the circumstances in which it was committed was to promote the highest good of the universe. And this holds true of all the sin in the world. For God has declared that the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. Now it is easy to see that it was not necessary for Abraham to know what would be the tendency of God's punishing the innocent with the guilty, in order to know whether it would be wrong in God to do it. If it had been possible for him to have known that God's punishing the innocent with the guilty would have had a direct tendency to promote the good of the universe, he would still have known that he would not have done right in doing it. Or had he known that his doing it would have had an indirect tendency to promote the good of the universe, still he would have known that it would not have been right for him to do it. He was perfectly able to judge of the nature of God's conduct, without knowing either the direct or indirect tendency of it. If it were supposable that benevolence should have a natural tendency to promote misery, still it would be morally excellent in its own nature. Or if it were supposable that selfishness should have a natural tendency to promote happiness, still it would be in its own nature, morally evil. If there were not an intrinsic excellence in benevolence and an intrinsic deformity and turpitude in selfishness, it would be absolutely impossible for any man to know whether he ought to exercise benevolence or selfishness, under different circumstances. Or in other words, it would be impossible to see any distinction between moral good and natural good, moral evil and natural evil. It is the nature of a voluntary exercise in a moral agent that renders it morally good, and not its tendency. And it is the nature of a voluntary exercise in a moral agent, that renders it morally evil, and not its tendency. Abraham, therefore, knew the moral rectitude of God in precisely the same way that God himself knew his own moral rectitude. He knew it by knowing the intrinsic excellence of his benevolent affections, and not by the tendency of them to promote the highest good of the universe. His perfect benevolence was prior, in the order of nature, to his forming his great design of creation, and therefore the excellency of his benevolence did not depend upon its tendency to create, and promote the good of the universe. God did not, and to speak with reverence, could not, discover the moral excellence of his own perfect benevolence

by its tendency to do good; for its moral excellence actually existed before he had determined to do good. And it is equally true, when one of our sinful race becomes truly benevolent, he discovers it by the nature of the exercise, and not by its tendency to do good. Men often do that from selfishness, which under present existing circumstances has a tendency to do good. And on the other hand men often do that from true benevolence which under present existing circumstances tends to do evil. But who will say that the moral excellence of benevolence is destroyed, by producing an unintended and undesirable effect? Or who will say that the moral deformity and turpitude of selfishness is destroyed, by producing an unintended, but desirable effect? If the moral nature of benevolence cannot be determined in one case by its effect, it cannot be determined in any other case by its effect. And if the moral nature of selfishness cannot be determined in one case by its effect, it cannot be determined in any other case by its effect. No case can be mentioned, nor conceived, in which the moral nature of any free voluntary exercise of the mind can be determined by the good or evil effect produced. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that the moral excellence of virtue consists in its tendency to produce happiness, or that the moral evil of sin consists in its tendency to produce misery. They are both founded in the nature of things. The one is morally excellent in itself considered, and the other morally evil in itself considered, without any regard to the cause that produces them, or the effect that follows from them. This Abraham knew, and consequently knew that it would be totally inconsistent with the moral rectitude of God to punish the righteous with the wicked. He judged so, not from the unknown consequences of God's punishing the innocent, but from the well-known nature of punishing the innocent. He knew that it was as morally impossible for God to punish the innocent, as it was for him to lie, or to do any other iniquity. And every other man in the world would have judged as Abraham did.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then he can never do evil that good may come. His benevolence is under the constant and infallible guidance of his moral rectitude. It is morally impossible that he should do what is wrong in the nature of things, to promote his own felicity or the felicity of any of his creatures. If it were possible for him to see that by speaking any thing false, or by doing any thing unjust, he could promote the highest good of the universe for ever, his moral

rectitude would render it morally impossible for him to do any such act, which is in its own nature wrong. It is upon this ground alone, that the inspired writers assert that God cannot lie; that is impossible for him to lie; and that there is no unrighteousness in him. Though he can overrule the sins of others to promote his own blessedness and the general good of the universe, yet he cannot destroy the criminality and ill-desert of sinners, and cause them to become innocent. And though it were naturally possible for him to overrule a sinful action in himself to promote the highest good of the whole universe, yet he could not destroy the criminality and guilt of that action; and consequently it is morally impossible that he ever should do a sinful action, to answer any purpose whatever. But if the criminality of a sinful action consisted in its mere tendency to promote misery and not in the nature of it, it is difficult to see why he could not do iniquity and overrule it for his own glory, as well as he can suffer his creatures to do iniquity and overrule it for his own glory; for he could alter the tendency of his own sin as easily, for aught we know, as he can alter the tendency of sin in his creatures. But since his moral rectitude consists in the nature of his pure benevolence, and not in its tendency to do good, it is morally impossible that he should do evil that good may come. His moral rectitude perfectly governs his boundless benevolence and almighty power, so that he can no more do evil than he can cease to be. He cannot punish the innocent with the guilty. He cannot break his promises. He cannot punish one of his creatures for the sin of another. And he cannot injure the least of his rational creatures to promote the happiness of all the rest. His moral rectitude binds him, in all cases, to do right.

2. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then he can never approve of his creatures' doing evil that good may come. Though he has given them abundant evidence in his word and providence that he does overrule all the evil they commit, for his own glory, and for the good of the universe; yet he has never given them the least reason to believe that he approves of their doing evil. I know they have endeavored to justify themselves in doing evil, because he has let them know that he will overrule it for his own glory. But the apostle sharply rebukes them for pretending to draw this inference from his overruling their sin for his own glory and the good of his holy creatures. He asks, "What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our un-

righteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)" or an objector: "God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? and not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just." The apostle here does not deny that he had said that God would overrule the unrighteousness of men to his own glory; but he denies that he had ever taught that sinners might do evil that good may come, or that God could not or would not punish them for all their unrighteousness. For he says their damnation would be just, and God would be unjust, if he did not condemn and punish them according to their ill desert.

3. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then he will not punish the finally impenitent the less, on account of the good they have done in the world. It cannot be denied that sinners have done a great deal of good in the world. The builders of the Ark did a great deal of good in building it. They were the means of saving the human race from utter destruction. But this was no reason why they should not perish after they had built it. The utility of their conduct did not alter the nature of their sins, nor diminish their desert of everlasting punishment. Judas did a great deal of good by betraying Christ. He was instrumental of promoting the salvation of all that will ever be saved. But this did not alter the nature of his sin, nor diminish, in his own view, his just desert of endless perdition. Joseph's brethren did a great deal of good, by selling him to the Egyptians. But this did not alter the nature of their malevolence, or diminish their criminality, in their own view, or in the view of God. If sinners do prophesy, work miracles, preach the gospel, and do ever so many things which promote the glory of God and the good of others, still the selfishness of their conduct remains the same, and deserves the same punishment that it would have deserved, if no good had followed from it. Accordingly Christ informs sinners that their plea of having done good in the world will be of no avail to prevent their final condemnation to eternal punishment at the last day. This is a sentiment which sinners are very loath to believe; and if they do believe, they heartily oppose it. They choose to judge of their own conduct contrary to the dictates of their own conscience, and contrary to the plain declarations of scripture. But if they are ever saved, they will cordially acknowledge that their best services deserved eternal punishment.

4. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then it is morally

impossible that he should ever injure any of his creatures. They are extremely apt to think that he often injures them, both by withholding good and inflicting evil. But he never withholds good from any creature, only when his moral rectitude requires him to do it. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He feels perfectly benevolent towards all his enemies, and does them all the good that he can do them consistently with his immutable rectitude. He causes his sun to rise and his rain to fall upon them, and gives them as large a portion of the good things of life, as he can consistently. So that he never can injure them by withholding any good thing from them which his perfect rectitude permits him to bestow. Nor can he injure them by inflicting more pain or misery upon them than they justly deserve. Though millions of mankind are every day suffering extreme pain and calamities, yet not one of them has any just ground to complain, or even to think hard of God, on account of the evils he suffers. And though many myriads of the spirits in prison are constantly suffering the weight of God's wrath, yet they have no just ground to complain, or even to think hard of God. A proper sense of the moral rectitude of God in the government and disposal of his creatures, and a cordial reconciliation to it, would silence every murmur and complaint in the minds and mouths of this rebellious world. And it is nothing but a firm belief of the moral rectitude of God, and a cordial approbation of it, that does now, and always will prevent all murmurs and complaints in heaven, in the view of the damned. Though the effects and consequences of his immutable moral rectitude are unspeakably dreadful, yet the moral rectitude from which they flow is supremely amiable, and deserves the approbation and praise of all holy beings, and will induce them to sing "Alleluia," in the view of it, to all eternity. They will rejoice that the righteous Lord has loved, and done righteousness.

5. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then all the objections which have been made or can be made against his conduct are altogether groundless. For he has always acted agreeably to the moral rectitude of his nature. If it be said that it was wrong for God to determine to save some, and not all mankind, before the foundation of the world, there is no just foundation for the objection. If indeed he had determined to *punish* a part of mankind, who were innocent, this would have been a solid ground of objection. But he did not determine to do this: he only determined to punish a part, and not all who were guilty. And who can say that there is any injustice in such a determination? If it be said that God does not

make a proper distinction between good and bad men in this world, the objection is groundless, because he treats them all better than any of them deserve. If it be said that it is wrong for God to punish men for doing that which he enables them by his universal influence over their minds to do, the objection is groundless; because he does not punish them if they are not guilty. But if they are guilty, then they deserve to be punished, and he does right in punishing them. They know that they act freely under his influence, and consequently when they do wrong it is because they choose to do wrong, and such a sinful choice deserves to be condemned and punished, they themselves being judges. Sinners often condemn themselves as Judas did, and Joseph's brethren did, for doing that which God enabled and disposed them to do to promote his own glory. Since God always acts agreeably to the moral and immutable rectitude of his nature, he always acts right, and never gives the least ground of just complaint in any part of his conduct towards his rebellious and murmuring creatures.

6. Since God is a being of perfect moral rectitude, all his works will eventually praise him. They will deserve and receive the approbation and praise of all his holy creatures. They will discover not only the wisdom and goodness of the divine character displayed in them, but the perfect rectitude of the divine conduct. Without the discovery of God's moral rectitude, there could be no just foundation to praise him for any or all of his works. This is the reason why the great works of Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander and the Cæsars, will eventually lose all their praise. They never had nor displayed any moral rectitude in all they did, and consequently all they did will finally redound to their everlasting reproach and self-condemnation. But the works of God will shine brighter and brighter to all eternity, and afford new arguments of gratitude and praise to all the hosts of heaven.

7. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then the weight of his wrath will be insupportable to the finally miserable. They will know that he does not punish them from malice, revenge or malevolence, but from true, pure, disinterested benevolence and justice. This will add an intenseness to their punishment, which they cannot support. They must sink under it, though they bid defiance to it before it comes. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a holy God; unspeakably more fearful than if he were not holy. No selfish creature, perhaps, would punish his worst enemies for ever. Satan would not. His malice may be satiated; but moral rectitude can never be satisfied without giving sinners a just recompense of reward.

8. If God be a being of moral rectitude, then it is the imme-

diate and important duty of sinners to become reconciled to him. He has never done them any injury, but has always done them good. They have never had any reason to hate and oppose him, but they have always had good reasons to love and serve him. And they must become reconciled to him, or he will be obliged by the rectitude of his nature to punish them for ever. He now invites them to be reconciled; he now commands them to be reconciled; and he now threatens to destroy them if they finally refuse to be reconciled to him upon his own gracious terms.

Finally, if God be a being of moral rectitude, then all his cordial friends are safe. They are the righteous, whom he will not destroy with the wicked. He has promised them eternal life, and his faithfulness cannot fail. They are safe amidst all the evils and calamities which fall upon the wicked world in this life. Abraham was safe, while he stood a solemn spectator of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Saints are safe, while thousands fall on their right hand and on their left, and sink down in endless darkness and despair. And though they may suffer many fiery trials in their way to heaven, as Abraham did, yet they will soon come out of great tribulations, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

THE VINDICTIVE JUSTICE OF GOD.

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. — 1 Samuel, xv. 33

Agag was king of the Amalekites, who were the natural enemies of the Israelites. Both nations sprang from the same original stock. The Israelites sprang from Jacob, and the Amalekites sprang from Esau, the brother of Jacob. Esau's posterity imbibed the spirit of their father, and harbored a mortal enmity to the posterity of Jacob. Accordingly, as soon as the Israelites left Egypt, and set out upon their journey to Canaan, the Amalekites, without receiving any provocation from the Israelites, came out and fought against them at Rephidim. But at the prayer of Moses and by the arm of Joshua, God defeated them; and at the same time devoted the whole nation to utter ruin. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." God delayed, for more than a hundred years, to put this irreversible sentence into execution. But after the Israelites were established in the land of promise, and had a king set over them, God gave a commission to Saul their king, by the hand of Samuel, to go and extirpate the whole race of Amalek. "Samuel said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the

way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Saul immediately raised an army of more than two hundred thousand men, and went and took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But he spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen, and all that was good. For this disobedience to the express command of God, Samuel, under a divine impulse, rebuked him and brought him to confess his offence. And under the same impulse, Samuel said, "Bring ye hither Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." Though Agag had been an enemy to Saul and to his people, and was still an enemy to both, yet Saul was disposed to save him from punishment. But God, who viewed Agag as an enemy to himself and to his people, would not release him from the punishment he deserved; but inspired Samuel to give him a just recompense of reward. This striking instance of the divine conduct teaches us,

That God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs. I shall,

I. Show that sinners are disposed to punish their enemies; and,

II. That God is still more disposed to punish his enemies than they are to punish their enemies.

I. I am to show that sinners are disposed to punish their enemies. This will appear both from their character and conduct.

1. It appears from their character, as drawn by the Searcher of hearts. God perfectly knows their real feelings, and has clearly described them in his word. And according to his infallible description, they are entirely selfish. They possess not the least spark of holy love, but are under the entire dominion of selfishness. They have not the love of God in them, but are emphatically lovers of their own selves. Though their selfishness disposes them to love those who love them, yet it no less disposes them to hate those who hate them, whether they are friendly or unfriendly to God. Satan, who knew the nature of selfishness, told God that if he should only touch the interest of Job he would curse him to his face; and had Job been the selfish person he represented him to be, his assertion would undoubtedly have been verified when God stripped him

of his dearest interest. Esau hated Jacob because Jacob had injured his interest; and there was a time when he would have wreaked his vengeance upon him, had it not been for a divine restraint. Sinners, who are under the reigning power of selfishness, are not only hateful, but they hate one another. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known." They are always disposed to punish their enemies; and nothing prevents them from doing it, but either interest, impotence, or fear. But,

2. It more clearly appears from their conduct than from their character, that they are disposed to punish their enemies. They have been in all ages imbruing their hands in each other's blood. Nations have destroyed nations, and filled the earth with violence. Thousands of individuals have destroyed their supposed enemies by duels and assassinations. Sinners are disposed not only to punish their enemies, but to punish them in the most cruel and barbarous manner. No species of animals have ever been found, that are so cruel to one another as men are to men. They have invented a thousand ways of putting one another to the most excruciating tortures, for the most trifling offences. But it is needless to enlarge upon this part of the subject. I proceed, therefore, to the principal point proposed, which is, to show,

II. That God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs.

God knows that sinners are his enemies, and hate his existence, his perfections, his designs, and his whole government. He knows that they hate him without a cause, as he has always treated them perfectly right. He knows that they are enemies to one another, and to all intelligent creatures. He viewed Agag as an enemy to all righteousness; and he views all sinners in the same light. Hence he must be displeased with them; and if displeased, disposed to express his displeasure towards them; and if disposed to express his displeasure towards them, he must be disposed to punish them; for nothing but punishment is a proper expression of his displeasure towards them. There is precisely the same reason to believe that God is disposed to punish his enemies, that there is to believe that he is really displeased with them for hating and opposing him without a cause. And who can seriously think that God is not displeased with his unholy, impenitent and incorrigible enemies? But if this be true, must we not suppose that he is as much disposed to punish them, as they are to punish their enemies? and indeed much more disposed to punish them? He was

more disposed to punish Agag than Saul was. As soon as he had gotten Agag in his power, and was able to restrain him from doing any more mischief to himself and to his people, he was willing to spare his life. But God, who had been disposed to punish him, and had devoted him to destruction, remained inflexibly disposed to give him his reward; and by the sword of Samuel, made him an example of his amiable and awful justice. But still it may be inquired, why God was more disposed to punish Agag than Saul was? and why in all cases, he is more disposed to punish his enemies, than sinners are to punish their enemies? To this I answer,

1. It is because he hates the conduct of his enemies simply considered, but sinners do not hate the conduct of their enemies simply considered. Though their enemies may act sinfully, it is not their sinfulness that they hate. It is only because their sinfulness is pointed against them, and does them hurt, that they hate it. They love the spirit which their enemies possess, and would be pleased to see it acted out against other persons, whose interest or happiness they wish to have destroyed. They love selfishness, when it is exercised to promote their interest. They love avarice, injustice, malice and revenge, when these sinful affections are exercised in their favor, and never hate them only when they operate to their disadvantage. They do not hate the conduct of their enemies because it is in its own nature sinful, but merely because it is injurious to their own personal good. Saul did not hate Agag for any cruelty, malice, or revenge, which he had exercised before he came against him and his people in battle, and therefore was not disposed to punish him, after he had disarmed him of his power to do him and his subjects any more hurt. And this holds true in all cases in respect to sinners; they are not disposed to punish their enemies as sinners, but only as opposers of their own safety or happiness. But God hates the conduct of his enemies because it is sinful, and not merely because it is hurtful. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin with the least complacency. It is the abominable thing that his soul hateth. And he is disposed to punish it in his enemies, because he hates it in itself considered. He hates it as much as he loves holiness. We are told, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." God is infinitely holy, and therefore hates all unholiness and sin with infinite hatred. Though he knows that he can overrule all sin to his own glory, and cause it to promote his own interest, yet he hates it perfectly, and is as much disposed to punish it as to hate it. He hates his enemies because they are in their own nature hateful; and he is disposed to punish them because they are in their own nature deserving of punishment. He is

therefore far more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish their enemies.

2. God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, because his hatred to his enemies cannot be turned into love. The hatred of sinners can be turned into love, because they do not hate the character, but only the conduct of their enemies, which they view detrimental to themselves. As soon as their enemies any way atone for the evil which they have done to them, and turn about and unite with them in promoting their interest, their enmity or disposition to punish them softens into love and friendship. Thus Ahab king of Israel became reconciled to his enemy, Benhadad king of Assyria, as soon as he meanly prostrated himself before him with a rope upon his neck and humbly begged for mercy. Ahab loved that enemy to God and to his people, as soon as he appeared friendly to himself. And this highly displeased God, who sent his prophet to reprove him for his sinful and selfish compassion to one who deserved to die. Jehoshaphat was an enemy to the king of Israel, and the king of Israel was an enemy to him. But when the king of Israel invited him to his court, treated him with great attention, and proposed to unite with him in regaining Ramoth-Gilead, which he claimed as part of his kingdom, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah consented to go with him to Ramoth-Gilead, where God punished him for his friendship to an idolatrous and wicked king. Herod and Pontius Pilate were bitter enemies to each other; but as soon as Christ stood in their way, they could become cordial friends, and unite in destroying their common enemy. Thus kings, and princes, and subjects, all over the world, become cordially reconciled to those whom they have punished, or wish to punish, as soon as they cease to do them personal injury, or begin to do them personal good. The reason is, in all these cases, that they hate their enemies and feel disposed to punish them, only on account of personal injuries done to them. But God feels very differently towards his enemies. He hates their character, as well as their conduct. He sees every imagination of the thoughts of their heart to be evil, only evil continually. He sees not only their enmity to him, but their enmity to his subjects and to his whole kingdom. He hates their apparent friendship as much as their open opposition; and he hates both for what they are in themselves considered, and not merely for the mischief they do. His hatred, therefore, cannot be turned into love by any alteration in their mere outward conduct, while their hearts remain the same. So long, therefore, as his enemies remain sinners, his hatred of them and his disposition to punish them still remain. He is disposed to

punish them not merely for some particular instances of their conduct towards him, but for all their conduct towards themselves and their fellow creatures. He is angry with the wicked every day and every moment, for being enemies to all righteousness. And hence he is disposed to punish his enemies far more severely than sinners are to punish theirs.

3. God's hatred of his enemies is perfectly just, but sinners' hatred of their enemies is always unjust. They never hate them for what they ought to be hated, but only for the injury which they receive from them. They do not hate them for selfishness, which is the only thing for which they ought to be hated; and therefore their very hatred is selfish and wicked, for which they really deserve to be punished. And a sense of their own guilt in hating their enemies for what they approve in themselves, often checks and restrains them from punishing their enemies with severity, and in many cases, from punishing them at all. Instead of feeling that they ought to punish them in justice, they feel that it is wrong to punish them, which makes them more mild, lenient and forgiving. But God hates his enemies for nothing but what deserves to be hated, and what his real benevolence and love to holiness necessarily disposes him to hate. His hatred of his enemies is a holy hatred, and his disposition to punish them a holy disposition. He feels morally obliged, in justice, to express his hatred of them, by punishing them according to their deserts. It belongs to him to punish his enemies, and to punish them exactly according to the degrees of their guilt. His own glory as the Supreme Sovereign of the universe, requires him to punish them, and to punish them exactly according to their demerit. And he has clearly and solemnly declared his determination not to clear, but to condemn and punish the guilty. "See now that I, even I am he; and there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." God feels himself infinitely bound, in point of justice, and in regard to his own glory, to manifest his perfect displeasure towards his enemies, by giving them the reward justly due to them for their sins. He is, therefore, infinitely more disposed to punish his enemies, than sinners are to punish their enemies; and he will actually punish them with unspeakably greater severity. Besides,

4. There is another reason why God is more disposed to punish his enemies, than sinners are to punish theirs; and that is, his regard to the good of the universe, which sinners totally

disregard in punishing their enemies. They are disposed to punish their enemies for their own sake, and not for the good of others. They are disposed to punish, merely to gratify their own feelings, whether it tends to help or hurt any other person or being besides themselves. Yea, they are often disposed to punish their enemies, though they know it must and will hurt their friends. They have no regard to the general good in punishing, but will let the greatest public enemy pass with impunity, if their own personal interest or feelings do not require him to be punished. But God punishes his enemies, both to display his justice, and to promote the best interests of the whole intelligent creation. And his disposition to punish his enemies is equal to his disposition to do what is right and best. God loves the good of his creatures infinitely more than either saints or sinners love their own good; and he is infinitely more disposed to promote the good of his creatures, than they are to promote their own good. Hence he is far more disposed to punish his and their enemies, who oppose his and their interests, than they are to punish such injurious and guilty creatures. Accordingly, he always measures the weight and duration of that punishment which he inflicts upon his enemies, according to the good to be answered by it. This appears from the whole course of his providence towards mankind, in every age, and in every part of the world. He punishes sinners in this world just as often and as much as the good of mankind in this world requires, and no more. When the good of the world requires it, he punishes individuals; and when the good of the world requires it, he punishes cities, or nations, or whole kingdoms, by wars, pestilence, earthquakes, and the most desolating judgments. When the general good required it, he drowned the old world, burned up Sodom and Gomorrah, plunged Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, buried Korah and his company in the earth, destroyed Babylon, Nineveh, and even Jerusalem the capital of his own people. Sinners in this world have never been disposed to punish their enemies so much as God has been disposed to punish his. Indeed, he has never suffered sinners to punish their enemies, only when he was far more disposed to punish them himself. He employs sinners to punish both his and their enemies. So that whenever they punish their enemies, he is the prime mover and agent in their punishment. Sinners have never desired, nor intended to inflict such severe punishments upon their enemies, as God has upon his. He has constantly been seeking the general good, and has been constantly disposed to punish and even destroy every person and people, which the general good required to be punished or destroyed. And the same benevolence of the Deity will for

ever dispose him to punish his enemies to as great a degree, and to as long a period, as the general good shall require. Though the disposition of sinners to punish their enemies may abate, and die, and even turn into compassion and tenderness, yet God's disposition to punish his enemies will never cease, nor abate, but remain as long as he remains perfectly holy, just and good, and they remain guilty and ill-deserving creatures. He has threatened to send them away into everlasting punishment; and what he has threatened, he is able and disposed to inflict, and none can deliver out of his hand.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners are less disposed to punish their sinful enemies, than God is to punish his enemies, then their tender mercies are unholy and criminal. There is nothing upon which many gross sinners more value themselves than their tenderness and compassion towards the miserable and guilty. Indeed all sinners have more or less tenderness and sympathy towards miserable and sinful objects; and they consider their sympathetic feelings as really amiable and virtuous. But God says in his word, that their tender mercies are cruel. They are often very unwilling to punish those whom they ought to punish, and to see others punished who justly deserve to be punished. The tender mercies of parents often prevent them from punishing with the rod of correction their guilty children, whom they ought to punish. The tender mercies of executive officers often prevent them from informing against transgressors of good and wholesome laws, and from putting the laws into execution. The tender mercies of friends often prevent them from exposing one another to the punishment they know they deserve. And the tender mercies of enemies often prevent them from exposing those to punishment who justly deserve it, or to so great punishment as their conduct merits. This was true in respect to Saul. He was not willing to punish Agag so much as he deserved, and so much as God was disposed to punish him. Jehoshaphat had no disposition to punish the king of Israel, after he appeared friendly to him, though God eventually punished him severely. And there is no sinner in the world, who is willing that his greatest enemy should be punished eternally. But if God be not too much disposed to punish his enemies, then sinners are too little disposed to have them punished. Their tender mercies are selfish and cruel, and would destroy the highest good of the universe. Satan undoubtedly would, if he could, unbar the gates of destruction, and let himself and all the spirits in prison go free, rather than see himself and others reserved in chains to

everlasting darkness and despair. But is there any thing amiable and virtuous in his tender mercies? If not, then there is nothing amiable or virtuous in those who profess to desire and expect universal salvation. They do not hate sin as God hates it, and have not the same disposition to punish it that God has to punish it, according to its intrinsic demerit. Nothing but pure, disinterested benevolence can dispose any creature or being to inflict an eternal punishment for sin. The reason is, no creature or being who is destitute of pure, disinterested benevolence, can hate sin for what it is in itself, or can be disposed to punish it any more or any longer than their interest requires it to be punished. All sinners are apt to think that God is altogether such an one as themselves; and as they are not disposed to punish their enemies for ever, that God is not disposed to punish his incorrigible enemies for ever.

2. If God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then none can truly love God without loving his vindictive justice, or his disposition to punish the finally impenitent for ever. This is an essential attribute of his nature; and he can no more divest himself of it, than he can divest himself of any other essential attribute that he possesses. He has as plainly revealed his vindictive justice in his word, and as strikingly displayed it in his providence, as any one of his glorious perfections. He has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." He has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And his vindictive justice is but a branch of his pure and disinterested benevolence. It is, therefore, impossible that any should sincerely love God, without loving his vindictive justice, or inflexible disposition to punish sin according to its desert. I know that many imagine that the gospel has drawn a veil over his justice, and displays only his mercy to sinners. But this is so far from being true, that the justice of God shines more clearly in the face of Jesus Christ on the cross, than in the law at Mount Sinai. And that the justice of God might not be obscured by the gospel, Christ directed his apostles, and all his ministers through them, to go into all the world and proclaim: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It must be owing to a misapprehension of the nature and design of Christ's sufferings and death on the cross, and to a misapprehension of the terms of the gospel, if any imagine that the gospel does not display the vindictive justice of God. It is impossible therefore, for any to approve and embrace the gospel understandingly, while they disapprove and hate the vindictive justice of God. The gospel may be, and often is so preached, as to lead sinners to think that they love a sin-forgiving, while

they hate a sin-punishing God. But this is a most dangerous delusion; for God is as much disposed to punish as to forgive sin. This all must know either in this world, or the next; and when those who imagine they love the mercy, while they hate the justice of God, discover this truth, it will destroy all their false love and awaken all their native enmity to God, which must be removed, or they will perish for ever.

3. If God be more disposed to punish his enemies, than sinners are to punish theirs, then his present conduct in punishing sinners is a strong evidence that he will punish the finally impenitent for ever. This is called an evil world, because so many evils and calamities abound in it. Many are the afflictions of the righteous as well as of the unrighteous. God punishes both saints and sinners in this life, and sometimes he punishes both severely. And he never punishes any who do not deserve it. And since he punishes men in this world because they deserve to be punished, it is rational to conclude that he will punish the impenitent in another world because they deserve it. The apostle Peter reasons in this manner: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Again this same apostle says, "If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; — the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." These passages are to be understood literally, in their plain and obvious sense, because they perfectly agree with the general current of scripture, and with the dictates of reason on this subject. There are the same reasons for God's punishing his incorrigible enemies in another world, as for punishing them in this; and there are the same reasons for his punishing them for ever, as for punishing them at all. One reason why God punishes men in this world is, because he hates sin in its own nature; and another reason is, because the punishment of sin tends to promote the good of mankind in this world. These two reasons will exist in their full force in another world, and require God to punish sin there, because he hates it, and to punish it for ever, because the punishment of

it will for ever display his amiable justice, and raise the holiness and happiness of the heavenly world to the highest degree of perfection. There is every reason to believe from scripture, from the nature of sin, from the character of God, and from his punishing sin in this world, that he will punish it for ever. Hence says the apostle: "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

4. If God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then all real saints are willing that God should punish his enemies as much and as long as they deserve to be punished. They are willing to be punished themselves, and to see others punished in this world, as much and as long as a wise, holy and benevolent God sees best to punish them. Samuel was willing to punish Agag, and hew him in pieces before the Lord, and at his command. Moses and the pious Israelites were willing to see God sink Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea; and so were the angels, who saw that tremendous punishment of God's enemies; and they have sung the song of Moses ever since. The people of God in our day have appointed and observed days of thanksgiving for the defeat and overthrow of their public enemies. And even the heathen suppose that sin deserves to be punished, and that their gods will not suffer it to pass with impunity. So they supposed in respect to Jonah, and so they supposed when the viper fastened on Paul's hand. Every man has that within him which tells him that sin deserves to be punished. And every good man has that within him which approves and loves the justice of God in punishing sin. Every good man is holy, as God is holy, and loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. All the heavenly world, who are holy as God is holy, benevolent as God is benevolent, and righteous as God is righteous, cordially approve of his righteousness in the punishment of the sinful and impenitent spirits in prison. They say, "Amen, Alleluia," when they see the tokens of their endless punishment. And it is difficult to conceive how any can hope and expect to go to heaven, and to be happy there, who do not approve and love God for punishing his incorrigible enemies, whether their nearest and dearest friends shall be found among those enemies or not.

5. If God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then sinners must have a new heart, in order to enter into and enjoy the kingdom of heaven. They are naturally unwilling that their own enemies, or the enemies

of God, should be punished either in this world, or in the world to come, according to their desert. Saul, who we have reason to fear was an unholy and unrenewed man, was not willing that Agag, an enemy to him and to the people of God, should be punished as he deserved, and as God punished him. He probably felt an indignation, when he saw Samuel, in obedience to the divine command, hew him in pieces. And probably he never has approved, and never will approve of either the temporal or eternal punishments which God has inflicted, or ever will inflict upon any of his sinful and ill-deserving creatures. This is also true of all men in a state of nature, which is a state of sin. They do not hate sin in themselves or others, on its own account, and therefore cannot approve of its being punished according to its desert. But they must be brought to hate sin on its own account, in themselves and others, and to be willing that it should be punished according to its desert, in order to go to heaven and be happy there. Hence they must have a new heart and a new spirit, in order to be prepared for the future and everlasting enjoyment of God. It is as true now as it ever was, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Holiness, and nothing but holiness, hates sin as sin, or on account of its intrinsic moral evil. Supposing the pit of destruction were opened to the view of any unrenewed sinner, he would in his heart take part with the miserable against God, and condemn him, rather than those whom he has condemned to endless destruction. But would Samuel have done so in this world? or will he ever do so in heaven? No, by no means; he and all holy creatures will justify God, and condemn his enemies as he condemns them. And what was and is Samuel's duty, is now, and always will be, the duty of every sinner. But no sinner will ever do this without a new and better heart than he has at present. He must make him a new heart and a new spirit, or he must eternally die.

6. If God is more disposed to punish his enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then sinners have no ground to depend upon the patience of God. Sinners are extremely apt to depend upon the patience of God, supposing that he does and will wait upon them, because he pities them, and is unwilling to punish them. Agag depended upon the patience of Saul, and, because he delayed to punish him, expected he never would punish him; therefore he said to himself, "the bitterness of death is past." Just so sinners feel towards God. Because he delays to punish them, they imagine he never will punish them. But their dependence upon the patience of God is daring presumption. God does not wait upon them because

he pities them, and is not disposed to punish them; but because he has some important end to answer by waiting upon them. He often waits upon them as he waited upon the Amorites, that they may fill up the measure of their iniquities, which he knows they will be disposed to do. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You may think the bitterness of death is past, because you are in health, or because you have escaped great and imminent dangers, or because you have been suffered to trifle on the Sabbath, and on days of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, or because you have been indulged in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but his Spirit will not always strive with man, nor his patience always continue. God is angry with you every day. If you turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death; and he will hew you in pieces. Let not the old man say, "the bitterness of death is past," because he hath been preserved so long; for death may be near. Let not the strong man say, "the bitterness of death is past," because he is young; for death may be near. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." Therefore, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And in order to be reconciled to God, you must condemn yourselves, and justify God in your condemnation to everlasting punishment.

SERMON XVIII.

THE GLORY OF GOD ILLUSTRATED.

And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee.—Exodus, xxxiii. 18, 19.

Moses became early acquainted with God. He enjoyed peculiar manifestations of his favor in the family of Pharaoh. In his retirement in Midian he maintained for forty years a near and familiar intercourse with the Deity. At length he was called to the great and arduous work of leading the people of God from the house of bondage to the land of promise. This gave him still better opportunities for seeing the glory of God, and for enjoying the manifestations of his love. God freely conversed with him, face to face, as a man converses with his friend. He not only saw the displays of divine vengeance in the plagues poured upon Egypt, and the displays of divine love in the mercies granted to Israel, but he was taught the designs of the Deity, and employed as an instrument of making them known to his people. Under these happy circumstances, he made a rapid progress both in the knowledge and the love of God. The more he saw of the divine glory at one time, the more he wished to see of it at another. Having just been interceding with God to pardon his people for making and worshipping the golden calf, and having received assurance that God would both preserve and guide them through the wilderness by his gracious and visible presence, he makes a particular request for himself, which, though God seems to deny, yet he more than grants. The request is, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." The answer is, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." The promise of God here

seems to surpass the petition of Moses. He desires a visible display of God's visible glory. This God denies, but promises to give him something better, even a bright display of his moral glory. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." These words, in this connection, plainly teach us,

That God necessarily displays all his glory by displaying all his goodness.

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Consider what is to be understood by the glory of God.

II. Consider what is to be understood by his displaying all his goodness.

III. Show that by doing this he necessarily displays all his glory.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by the glory of God. The glory of any moral agent is that intrinsic moral excellence, which renders him worthy of approbation and esteem. This is never seated in the understanding, but in the heart. There is no moral excellence in a man's intellectual powers, but only in his disposition to employ them to some valuable purpose. All intrinsic moral excellence lies in the heart. Here we always look for it, and here only can we ever find it. A man who possesses a good heart, or a truly benevolent disposition, is a man of real worth. Such is our idea of the glory of a finite, rational, moral agent. And since we derive our first ideas of glory from rational and benevolent creatures, we are obliged to consider the glory of God to be of the same nature with the glory of other moral beings. Accordingly we must suppose that the glory of God is that intrinsic moral excellence which is seated in his heart, and which renders him worthy of the supreme love and homage of all intelligent creatures. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; and as God thinketh in his heart, so is he. God is love. And in this consists his real, intrinsic, supreme, moral excellence and glory. I proceed,

II. To consider what is to be understood by God's displaying all his goodness. His promise to Moses is very singular and very significant. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." That God may display all his goodness, he must do two things.

1. He must display his goodness to as high a degree as possible. Though there be no degrees of goodness in God himself, yet there must be degrees of displaying it to creatures of limited capacities. God, who knows all things, knows the highest degree to which his goodness can be displayed. He is perfectly acquainted with the capacities of all his creatures, and with all the ways of displaying his goodness to the view of their minds. And unless he gives them as clear and full a dis-

play of his goodness as they are capable of beholding, it cannot be said with propriety that he displays all his goodness. But when he displays as much of his goodness as they are capable of comprehending, then he may be said in that respect to display all his goodness.

2. God's displaying all his goodness farther implies his displaying it in all its branches, and agreeably to the various natures and characters of his dependent creatures. In particular,

1. It implies displaying his *benevolence* towards all sensitive natures. Nothing more is necessary to render any creature the proper object of benevolence, than a mere capacity of enjoying happiness and suffering pain. And as all the creatures of God possess this capacity, so they are all the objects of his benevolent feelings. He hears the young ravens when they cry. He opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He regards with a benevolent eye, the highest angel and the lowest insect. His perfect goodness is perfect benevolence towards all the proper objects of benevolence. And it is impossible that he should display all his goodness, without displaying universal benevolence towards all his creatures, whether rational or irrational, whether virtuous or vicious. Mere benevolence has no respect to character, but only to capacity. And therefore God displays his benevolent regards to the lowest as well as the highest, and to the worst as well as to the best, of his creatures.

2. In order to display all his goodness, God must display his *complacency* towards all holy beings. The goodness of the Deity naturally and necessarily inclines him to love goodness, wherever he sees it. Those creatures, therefore, who are virtuous and holy, are the objects of his complacency and delight. He not only desires their happiness, but loves their characters. Accordingly we read, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." "The Lord loveth the righteous." And to Zion it is said, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save thee; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." God loved Moses, and manifested his love to him by conversing freely with him as a man converses with his friend. John was the beloved disciple of Christ, who allowed him to lean on his bosom. And Christ says all that love him are loved of his Father. God loves all who bear his moral image, from the highest seraph to the lowest saint. Hence he cannot display all his goodness, without

displaying his love of complacency towards all amiable, holy, virtuous beings.

3. Another branch of divine goodness is *grace* towards the guilty and ill deserving. This God explicitly declares is implied in his goodness, and must be manifested in displaying it. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee;—and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." The goodness of God, as it respects sinners, is grace, or mercy, or compassion, or that disposition which leads him to pardon their offences. Perfect goodness is perfect grace to the guilty. So it is more fully represented in the chapter succeeding that of the text, where we have an account of God's displaying his goodness agreeably to his promise to Moses. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." God's forgiving goodness, or pardoning love, lay at the foundation of the work of redemption. All the blessings of the gospel, and even the gospel itself, took their rise from this branch of divine goodness, which is more celebrated in scripture than any other beauty in the divine character. Our Saviour declares, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Paul says in the fifth of Romans, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." And he celebrates divine grace in stronger terms still, in the second of Ephesians. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Such a display of divine grace is absolutely necessary, in order to give a full display of divine goodness. It must be observed,

4. That another branch of God's goodness is *distributive justice*, or a disposition to punish impenitent sinners according to their deeds. Such distributive justice God manifested when he made all his goodness pass before Moses. Having proclaimed himself as forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, he adds, "And that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting

the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." This must mean his punishing the impenitent, because it is set in contrast with his forgiving the penitent. And God often declares that he has not only a right, but a disposition to punish incorrigible sinners. "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal;—If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." To this the apostle refers, when he says to christians, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord." It must be the nature of a perfectly good being to feel affections exactly correspondent to the characters and dispositions of his reasonable creatures. As God loves the good, so he must hate the evil; and as he is disposed to reward the good, so he must be disposed to punish the evil. Accordingly David represents God as feeling and conducting in this manner. "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." In another place, the Psalmist calls upon the church to praise God for the displays of his goodness in punishing the wicked. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.—To him that smote Egypt in their first-born; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever.—To him which smote great kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." God's goodness is a consuming fire to the finally impenitent, and will burn to the lowest hell. And this amiable attribute of vindictive justice must be displayed, in order to a full display of divine goodness. Thus God displays all his goodness when he displays it in the highest possible degree, and in every possible way. It is impossible to conceive that a more clear and full display of goodness than this, can be made by the greatest and best of beings. It remains to show,

III. That God, by thus displaying all his goodness, necessarily displays all his glory. This is plainly supposed in the text. Moses prays that God would show him his glory, and God replies, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." There appears no pertinency in this reply, unless the Deity would necessarily display all his glory, by displaying all his goodness. But the truth of this will more fully appear, if we consider,

1. That when God displays all his goodness, he displays all his moral character. The Supreme Being has no moral excellence but what is included in his goodness. God is love; all his goodness consists in love; all his love lies in his heart; and his heart is the seat of all his moral excellence. By displaying all his heart, therefore, he necessarily displays all his moral character. But he displays all his heart, when he displays all his goodness. For all the feelings of his heart are goodness itself. So that it is impossible for God to display all his goodness, without displaying all his feelings; and when all his feelings are expressed or acted out, his whole heart and all his moral excellence is displayed. Besides,

2. When God displays all his goodness, he necessarily displays all his natural as well as moral excellence. Self-existence, independence, omnipresence, almighty power, boundless knowledge and infinite wisdom, form the natural excellence or glory of God. But all these natural attributes derive their real glory from his goodness, without which, they would be a blemish rather than a beauty in his character. When his natural perfections are under the influence of perfect goodness, and exercised to display it, then they appear in all their glory; but could we suppose them to be disconnected from perfect goodness, and under the influence of a malevolent heart, they would appear infinitely odious and terrible, and form the most malignant and detestable character conceivable. It is the goodness of God which stamps a beauty and glory upon all his natural attributes. Accordingly, when he displays all his goodness, he necessarily displays all the glory of his natural perfections. The full display of his goodness requires the highest exertions of his power, wisdom and knowledge. All these must be exerted, in order to form and execute a scheme which is calculated to promote the highest possible good of the universe. If God displays all his goodness, therefore, he must necessarily display all his greatness. This connection between the displays of goodness and greatness we find in men. Moses could not display all his goodness, without displaying all his greatness. Paul could not display all his goodness without displaying all his greatness. And Christ could not display all the feelings of his heart, without displaying all the perfections of his nature. So the Supreme Being cannot display all his moral without displaying all his natural attributes. God has no glory but what consists in and is derived from his goodness; and, therefore, by displaying all his goodness, he must necessarily display all his glory. Having illustrated the several particulars proposed, it remains to draw a number of plain and important inferences from what has been said.

1. If God be a being who possesses and displays perfect goodness, then the religion which he has required of mankind is a reasonable service. He saith to every one who is capable of understanding his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Supreme love to God is the sum and comprehension of all that religion which he has enjoined upon men. And if he be a being of supreme moral excellence, then he is worthy of the supreme affection of all his reasonable creatures. It is neither superstition nor enthusiam to love, to fear, to obey, to worship and to adore, the greatest and best of beings. Rational creatures cannot give a brighter display of their rationality, than in discerning the supreme excellences of their Creator, nor a brighter display of their goodness, than in giving him the supreme affection of their hearts. If it be reasonable to love any object, it is reasonable to love the most amiable object. If it be reasonable to esteem any object, it is reasonable to esteem that which has the greatest natural and moral excellence. If it be reasonable to obey any being, it is reasonable to obey him whose will is perfect rectitude. If it be reasonable to submit to the government of any being, it is reasonable to submit to the government of him who always knows and always does what is best. If it be reasonable to worship any being, it is reasonable to worship him who is infinitely the greatest and best of all beings. The religion which God requires is founded in the nature of things, and must remain a reasonable service on the part of man, as long as he retains his rational nature, and God possesses supreme natural and moral excellence.

2. If God must display his goodness in order to display his glory, then by seeking his own glory he must necessarily seek the good of his creatures. A full display of divine goodness must necessarily promote the highest happiness of the intellectual system. God cannot, therefore, display all his goodness without aiming to diffuse the largest possible portion of holiness and happiness through the universe; or in other words, he cannot seek his own glory in the highest degree, without seeking the highest good of the intelligent creation. The scriptures abundantly teach us that God aims at his own glory in all his conduct. We read that he "made all things for himself;" and that "for his pleasure they are and were created." In dispensing mercies and judgments, he tells us he means to display his glory before the eyes of all his intelligent creatures. But in every instance of displaying his glory, he displays his goodness, and promotes the happiness of the universe. In creating angels and men, and all inferior objects, his ultimate

design was to make them instruments in his hand of promoting the holiness and happiness of the universe. For if there be one creature in the universe, whose creation, destination, and final disposal will not display the goodness of God, it cannot subserve his glory. Just so far, therefore, as all created objects will eventually promote the general good of the universe, just so far and no farther will they promote the glory of their Creator. The supreme glory of God and the supreme good of the universe are necessarily and inseparably connected. And it is for want of seeing this connection, that so many object against the ultimate end of God in the creation of the world. They imagine it is derogatory to God to say that he makes his own glory his ultimate end in creation, providence and redemption. They attach the idea of selfishness to this motive of action. But if God cannot seek his own glory in any other way than in displaying his goodness, then to seek his own glory to the highest degree, is the same thing as to give the highest expression of universal and disinterested benevolence.

3. If God cannot display all his glory without displaying all his goodness, then the glory of God required the existence of natural and moral evil. All the goodness of God in all its branches could not have been displayed, if natural and moral evil had not existed. If there had been no sinners among the creatures of God, he could never have had an opportunity of displaying his grace in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, nor of displaying his justice in punishing the guilty and impenitent. There was the same kind, if not the same degree of necessity in the divine mind to create sinful, as to create holy beings. If God meant to display all his goodness in creation, he was obliged to bring into being objects upon which he might display both his justice and mercy. God's goodness will shine brighter in his conduct towards sinful, than in his conduct towards holy beings. More of the heart of God will be seen in the work of redemption than in all his other works. In this scheme of grace, a foundation is laid for a full discovery of all the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. The glory of God, therefore, required that just such sinful creatures as mankind are should exist, that they might be both the monuments of divine justice and of divine grace.

4. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness; then those who love any part of his character, must necessarily love the whole. His natural perfections are under the entire control of his moral, and his moral perfections summarily consist in goodness, or universal, disinterested benevolence. His power is a benevolent power; his wisdom is a benevolent wisdom; his sovereignty is a benevolent sovereignty; his jus-

tice is a benevolent justice; and every other moral perfection of his nature is only a branch of general benevolence. No man, therefore, can understandingly approve of any one of the divine attributes, without approving of all. It is a great mistake in any to imagine that they love the goodness or mercy of God, while they feel opposed to his justice, or sovereignty, or any other divine attribute. The character of God is absolutely perfect and uniform. The characters of men are mixed characters, in which there are often some things to be liked, and others to be disliked. But in the Deity, perfect goodness stamps a beauty and glory upon all his attributes, and forms a character completely and infinitely amiable. The only reason why any imagine that they love some parts of the divine character and not the whole, is, that they do not really understand the nature of divine goodness, but suppose that God is altogether such an one as themselves. They love the goodness of God when they consider it as partial to themselves; but this is a false idea of it, and entirely consistent with hatred to his justice, and every other divine attribute.

5. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness, then those who dislike any part of the divine character, must necessarily dislike the whole. Some pretend to like the natural perfections of the Deity, while they object against his moral attributes. Those of a deistical turn profess to believe that there is one supreme Being, who is possessed of almighty power, boundless knowledge and every other natural perfection. And they insinuate that they have no objections against the existence and character of such a self-existent and eternal Being. Nor do mankind in general find fault with the natural attributes of the Deity, while they view them as disconnected from his moral character. The reason is obvious. The bare existence of the natural perfections of God, while they lie dormant, and are not voluntarily directed to any particular end, nor employed to promote any particular design, cannot in the least degree affect the interest or happiness of mankind. And the worst of men are willing there should be a Being of infinite natural perfections, if he will let them entirely alone. But there is no room to consider the natural attributes of God as separate from his moral, for they are all under the influence of his goodness. And being under the constant direction of his goodness, they cannot be really approved of, without approving of his goodness. Those therefore, who dislike the goodness of the Deity, which comprehends his whole moral character, must necessarily dislike every perfection of the divine nature.

There are others among the believers of divine revelation, who profess to like all the natural perfections of the Deity, and

some of his moral attributes, especially his goodness and grace; but yet heartily oppose his inflexible justice and absolute sovereignty. But if they dislike the justice and sovereignty of God, they must of necessity dislike his goodness and mercy, and every other natural and moral attribute. For the justice of God is only a branch of his perfect benevolence, and his sovereignty is a benevolent sovereignty. God does not dislike any of his own perfections; and those who are partakers of the divine nature cannot dislike any of its natural and moral excellences. It is not possible that any man should really know all the perfections of the Deity, and yet hate one, and love another. Those who really hate any part of his goodness, must necessarily hate all his goodness, or all the perfections of his nature which flow from it, and are always under the influence of it.

6. If the goodness of God forms his whole moral character, then those who do not love him supremely must necessarily hate him supremely. There is no defect nor blemish in the moral character of God. It is supremely amiable and glorious. In this light it appears to all holy beings. Angels and saints in heaven discern the moral glory and excellency of the Deity, and accordingly love him supremely. They love the goodness of God, which constitutes him the best of beings, and therefore they love him above all other beings. But on the other hand, those who discern no moral excellence in the universal and disinterested benevolence of his nature, must necessarily discern an infinite blemish in his character, and view him as the most odious and detestable being in the universe. This we know is the case with respect to fallen angels. They now hate God supremely for that same goodness and moral glory for which they once loved him supremely. And we find this to be the case with respect to sinners of mankind. When they are brought to realize the being, and to attend to the moral character of God, they feel their carnal mind rise in perfect enmity and opposition to him. They view all his natural perfections under the influence of impartial and universal goodness. This they hate in any being, and above all in the Supreme Being. While they consider all his perfections under the influence of his perfectly benevolent heart, they hate his power, his wisdom, his justice, his sovereignty, his grace and faithfulness. They hate God in exact proportion to his goodness and greatness. And as they believe him to be infinitely great and good, so they hate him infinitely more than any other, yea, than all other beings.

7. Does the glory of God consist in his goodness, or in his feeling properly towards all his creatures of every character and

condition; then we learn that it is the true character of God which sinners hate. They do not hate him while they imagine he is regardless of their character and conduct. And they do not hate him while they think he is altogether such an one as themselves, and feels a partial regard for their interest and happiness. But as soon as they realize that he loathes their characters, and feels disposed to punish them to all eternity for all their selfish feelings and conduct, then they begin to hate him with a perfect hatred. There is nothing in God which they so heartily oppose, as that very goodness or benevolence which constitutes all his moral excellence and glory. They would not hate him so much, if they could only believe that he was opposed to them upon the principle of perfect malevolence. There are no two dispositions so diametrically opposite to each other, as perfect benevolence and perfect selfishness. The first forms the character of God, and the second the character of sinners. Hence sinners perfectly hate that amiable and glorious disposition in the Deity, by which he is perfectly opposed to all their views and feelings. And the more they see the impartial, disinterested, sovereign goodness of his nature displayed in his works and in his word, the more directly and vigorously their hearts rise against him. Many suppose that all the opposition which sinners feel and express towards God, arises entirely from ignorance of his true character; and, therefore, they conclude if sinners could only be made acquainted with God's true character, and his real feelings towards them, they would instantly renounce their enmity, and become his most cordial friends. But this is a very great mistake. It is the very nature of sinful creatures to hate their benevolent Creator. They would not be sinners unless they possessed a selfish heart; and so long as they possess this, they cannot be reconciled to the character, nor subject to the holy and righteous law of God. Besides, if a clear and just view of the character of God would reconcile sinners to him in this world, why not in the next? All the damned will have a clear, realizing, just view of the moral character of God; but we have no reason to think that their knowledge of his character and conduct will ever subdue their enmity, and reconcile them to his vindictive justice. But if the true knowledge of God will not have this effect in a future state, then it cannot have this effect in the present state. Indeed, it is the highest absurdity to suppose that the clear knowledge of that being whom sinners naturally hate, should lead them to love him. But it is easy to see that the more selfish creatures know of the benevolence of the Deity, the more they will hate and oppose him.

8. If the glory of God consists in his goodness, then a clear

view of his goodness would destroy all the false hopes of sinners respecting their good estate. It is evident from scripture that sinners may think they have true love to God, and stand entitled to eternal life, while they are really in a state of total alienation from God. The Israelites entertained false hopes respecting the favor of God, when they received the law at Mount Sinai. The Scribes and Pharisees thought they stood high in the favor of God. The young man in the gospel, and Saul the persecutor, viewed themselves as really religious, and friendly to God. And Christ represents many as being fatally and finally deceived respecting their good estate. Such deception always arises from sinners' having a false idea of the true character and supreme glory of God. Did they understand the true nature of his goodness, which forms his supreme glory, they would not imagine they loved him while they were real enemies to him. They would be so far from thinking they loved him supremely, that they would sensibly feel a total opposition to his character. But when sinners have only a partial view of God's goodness, they may love it, and feel strong affections of gratitude to the greatest and best of beings. This is the case with respect to a very great part of those who live under the light of the gospel; they have formed such an idea of divine goodness, that they really feel friendly to the divine character. And this is more particularly the case with those who have been awakened to a sense of danger and guilt, and by some text of scripture, or by some other circumstance, have been led to believe that their sins are pardoned, and their persons accepted through Christ the beloved. But all these religious hopes and affections are false; and a clear view of all God's goodness, or of his goodness in all its branches, would totally destroy them. Let sinners only be convinced that God's goodness is impartial, and leads him to hate and reject all those who love him merely for a supposed partial affection towards them, and they would lose all their love, and feel a bitter enmity against his whole character. This is demonstrated by the conduct of the Israelites, who sang God's praises at the Red Sea, but murmured and rebelled, and died in the wilderness; and by those multitudes who cried "Hosannah" to Christ, but afterwards cried "crucify him," and finally imbrued their hands in his blood. A just view of God's goodness must necessarily destroy all those religious affections which flow from a false view of it.

9. If the glory of God consists in his goodness, then we learn why sinners are represented as blind to his glory. The scripture speaks much of the moral blindness of sinners, and represents them as incapable of seeing the moral beauty of the

divine character. Our Saviour frequently offended the Pharisees by calling them blind. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The apostle John says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." Those who are entirely under the influence of a selfish heart, cannot know how an infinitely benevolent being feels. Though they may have a speculative knowledge of disinterested love, and discern an essential difference between selfishness and benevolence, yet they have no experimental knowledge of the supreme beauty and glory of the Deity. They must feel as he does, in order to have a moral view of his moral excellence.

10. If God's glory essentially consists in his goodness, then those who have seen his real glory in the least degree, will desire to see more and more of it. This appears from the nature of spiritual discoveries, which afford peculiar satisfaction to those to whom they are made. Moses had seen the moral beauty of the divine character, and this led him to desire a more full and perfect discovery of it. "I beseech thee show me thy glory." David had seen the glory of God, and his partial views of it led him to desire larger and clearer views of his moral beauty. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." Those who possess the least degree of grace, and have had the least view of the moral excellence of the Deity, heartily desire to see all the glory of God displayed in all the manifestations of his goodness. They are not afraid of seeing his power, or his wisdom, or his sovereignty, or his justice, or his grace, too fully discovered; because they know that all his perfections are under the influence of that perfect benevolence which they love. They are not afraid of looking into futurity, and sending their thoughts into the regions of light and the regions of darkness; for they know that wherever they shall see the hand, they shall see the heart of God, and it will be impossible to discover any part of his character, or any instance of his conduct, which will not display his goodness. Blessed are the pure in heart, who love to see God. Their desires shall be completely satisfied when they arrive at the kingdom of glory; and with this hopeful prospect they may possess their souls in patience, as David did. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Let all take occasion from what has been said, to inquire whether they sincerely love the glory of God. This is some-

thing very different from loving their own happiness, and loving God for promoting it. To love the glory of God is to love all his goodness, and all the perfections of his nature which are under the influence of it. It is to be pleased with every part of the divine character, and every instance of the divine conduct. God has displayed his goodness towards angels and men, both in a state of holiness and in a state of sin. He has discovered his feelings towards holy and unholy creatures. He has manifested the highest complacency and delight in those who love him, and the highest displeasure against his enemies. He has provided a heaven of holiness and happiness for the righteous, and a place of everlasting torment for the wicked. He is now forming vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, upon whom to display all his goodness in all its branches to all eternity. Now do you desire to see the glory of God displayed in all these ways and upon all these objects? Are you wishing for the accomplishment of all God's designs for the display of his glory? Can you enter into his views and feelings in the plan of redemption, which is to unfold all his goodness? Can you desire that this scheme of perfect benevolence should be carried into execution, whether it shall raise or sink, save or destroy you for ever? If these be your feelings, you are really friendly to God. And that goodness which you love, will have a most friendly aspect upon your happiness. It will engage all the attributes of the Deity in your favor, and conduct you finally to that kingdom which was prepared for you before the foundation of the world. But, on the other hand, if you cannot enter into the benevolent views and feelings of the Deity, nor heartily acquiesce in all the displays of his goodness, you are real enemies to God and to all righteousness. And that goodness which you hate and oppose will engage all his perfections against you. He cannot display all his goodness, unless he makes his wrath and power known in your everlasting destruction. The same goodness of God which requires him to save penitent believing sinners, equally requires him to destroy the impenitent and unbelieving. The same goodness of God which prompts him to raise saints to the third heaven, will equally prompt him to sink sinners to the lowest hell. Let the goodness of God, therefore, both alarm and allure sinners to exercise that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation. Amen.

PART VI.

DECREES OF GOD.

SERMONS XIX.—XXIV.

SERMON XIX.

FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

KNOWN unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.—ACTS, xv. 18.

SOON after a church was formed at Antioch, certain men came from Judea, and taught the brethren that they could not be saved, unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses. This caused much dispute, which Paul and Barnabas endeavored to settle; but they could by no means reconcile the contending parties. At length, it was proposed to refer the question to an ecclesiastical council at Jerusalem. Accordingly, the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. After much had been said upon the subject, Peter rose up and told the council that he had been divinely directed to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and had been very successful in his preaching, which led him to conclude that it was an unnecessary and unreasonable burden to require the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. Next Barnabas and Paul declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought by their ministry among the Gentiles. Last of all, James rose up and said, "Men and brethren, hearken unto me; Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Here James alludes to what God had predicted concerning the conversion of

the Gentiles to the christian faith; from which he infers, that —known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. By all the works of God, we are to understand not only all his own works, but all the works of his creatures; because his works and their works are necessarily and inseparably connected. They live, and move, and have their being in him, and he works in them both to will and to do, in all their free and voluntary actions. By God's knowing all his works in this extensive sense, from the beginning of the world, we are to understand his knowing them from eternity. For the various scriptural phrases, "from the beginning," "from the beginning of the world," and "from the foundation of the world," are all of the same general import, and denote the same thing as the phrase, "from eternity." Indeed, we cannot carry our ideas of time farther back than to the beginning of creation; for there is nothing conceivable beyond that point of duration, by which we can measure time; and therefore we are constrained to call all duration before that period, eternity. There is no question, that by this expression in the text, the apostle meant to assert that, known unto God are all his works from eternity; which amounts to this plain proposition:

That God foreknew all things from eternity.

It is proposed to inquire,

I. Whether this be true; and,

II. How it can be true.

I. Let us inquire whether it be true, that God foreknew all things from eternity.

The foreknowledge of God is so generally believed and acknowledged, that there is no occasion for saying much under this head. It may suffice to adduce one argument in favor of it, which is drawn from the divine predictions. The apostle James infers the foreknowledge of God, from his foretelling future events. It must be allowed, that if God can foretel future events, he can certainly foreknow them. For it is impossible to conceive that any being can certainly foretel what he does not certainly foreknow. Among the many events which God has certainly foretold, that concerning the coming and death of Christ is the most remarkable, and most conclusive evidence of his universal foreknowledge. Immediately after the fall of our first parents, which involved themselves and all their posterity in sin and ruin, God predicted that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; which was four thousand years before the event took place. The same prediction was repeated, at different times and in different forms, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and afterwards to David and to the people of Israel. This authorized Peter to

say to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "that God had sworn with an oath to [David,] that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." Afterwards, he said to those who had killed the Prince of life, "Now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." God plainly foretold the time when, the place where, and the men by whom, Christ should be crucified; together with some of the most extraordinary circumstances of his death. We cannot suppose that God could have infallibly foretold the great event of Christ's death, with so many of the circumstances which attended it, unless he had infallibly foreknown all these things. Nor can we conceive that he could have infallibly foreknown all these things, unless he had infallibly foreknown all other events from Adam to Christ. For if there had been, among the many millions of other intervening events, any events which he did not foreknow, those unknown events might have prevented the death of Christ, and so have rendered all his predictions respecting the Messiah entirely false. God must have foreknown all the men from Adam to Christ, and all their thoughts, purposes, and voluntary actions, in order to have foretold the coming, sufferings, and death of the Redeemer on the cross. And if God foreknew all things from Adam to Christ, there can be no question but that he foreknew all things from Christ to this day, from this day to the end of time, and from the end of time through the boundless ages of eternity. Indeed, if God foreknew any events, he must have foreknown all events, from eternity. It is the prerogative of God alone to look through all futurity; accordingly, he claims this prerogative. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning; and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done." If God be God, he must necessarily know all things from eternity unto eternity.

Let us now inquire,

II. How it was possible for even God himself to foreknow, from eternity, all things in futurity.

This has been considered a very difficult question to solve. Some presume to deny the foreknowledge of God, in order to avoid what they perceive to be the natural and necessary consequences of it. But those who do not deny that God foreknew all things from eternity, suppose there was some way in which it was possible for him to possess this truly divine

knowledge, while at the same time, many of them hold that the subject is above human inquiry. Perhaps, however, by a serious and critical investigation, we may discover the way, so far as God has revealed it, and the only possible way in which, according to our apprehensions, he could foreknow all things from eternity.

Here it may be proper to observe,

1. That God could not foreknow all future things by information.

He was uncreated and self-existent, and sole inhabitant of eternity. There was no created being or object from which he could derive the least information. Hence the prophet with great propriety and emphasis demands, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or who, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" Before the foundation of the world, before the existence of angels and men, we know of no superior or inferior intelligence who could give him any information respecting any thing future. And after angels and men existed, they possessed no knowledge but what they derived from him, and so could afford him no information. Or if we should suppose that there were innumerable worlds created before this world, and that they were inhabited by myriads of intelligent creatures vastly superior to angels and men, yet they could have rendered no counsel, instruction or information, to him who was wonderful in counsel, and whose understanding was infinite. Though we cannot comprehend God, yet we know so much concerning him, as that it was absolutely impossible that he should foreknow all things from eternity by information derived from any being of a finite and dependent nature.

2. God could not have foreknown all things from eternity by seeing any cause out of himself, which should produce their future existence.

Things which begin to exist, must have a previous cause of their existence; and unless that previous cause be foreseen, their future existence cannot be foreseen. In eternity, God could have seen no previous cause out of himself, which could produce any future effect. We can foresee effects from their previous and known causes. Fire is a cause which will consume wood, and water is a cause which will extinguish fire. When we see fire applied to wood, we can foresee the effect in the cause; and when we see water applied to fire, we can foresee the effect in the cause. Had there been any causes from eternity, out of God, which could have produced all things future,

and had God seen all these causes, he might have foreseen and foreknown all things future in their causes. But in eternity, there were no causes, out of God, which could produce all things, and therefore he could not foreknow all things by foreseeing them in their cause. For instance, there was no cause out of God which could produce this world; and therefore he could not foreknow the existence of this world by seeing a previous cause of its existence, out of himself. The more clear, perfect and infallible God's essential attribute of knowledge was, the more clearly and certainly he must have foreknown that neither the heavens nor the earth, neither angels nor men, nor any other material or immaterial objects, could ever exist by any possible cause out of himself. It is certain, therefore, that God did not derive his foreknowledge of all things which have existed, and which ever will exist, from any cause or evidence out of himself.

3. God could not foreknow all things from eternity merely by knowing the essential perfections of his own nature.

He did know himself perfectly. He knew his self-existence, his independence, his unerring wisdom, his perfect goodness, and his almighty power. But this perfect knowledge of his own essential attributes could give him no knowledge of any thing future. For he was under no natural necessity of exercising any one of his attributes in producing any thing out of himself. There was no natural or necessary connection between the existence of God, and the existence of any thing else in the universe. It was, therefore, as impossible for God to foreknow all things by seeing any cause in himself, as by seeing any cause out of himself, of their future existence. It is confidently said by some, that God must necessarily have known all things from eternity, merely by knowing his own perfections. But since there was no natural or necessary connection between God's existence and the existence of any thing else, it was so far from being necessary that any thing should have existed besides God, that it may be demonstrated that God could have eternally prevented any other existence but his own. And if this might have been the case, the consequence is plain, that God could not have foreknown all things from eternity, either by information, or by seeing any cause of their existence either without himself, or within himself. The question now returns with redoubled force, How was it possible for God to foreknow all things from eternity?

This leads me to observe,

4. That the only plain and satisfactory answer to this question is, that God foreknew all things from eternity, because from eternity he had decreed all things.

God, as has been observed, was under no natural necessity of creating any thing. It depended entirely upon his own pleasure whether he should, or should not, create the present or any other material or immaterial system; and it also depended upon his mere pleasure as to what world he would create, and what and how many creatures he would bring into existence. It belonged to him to form his own plan of operation before he began the work of creation. He could not have acted with perfect wisdom without foreseeing his ultimate end, and all the means to accomplish it, before he produced any effect, or gave existence to any material or immaterial, rational or irrational object. Among all possible events, he determined what should, and what should not, take place. He determined the nature, the number, the magnitude, the form, the order and connection, of all things, and left not a single creature, a single object, or a single event, to mere casualty or chance. He limited, adjusted and bound all things together, by his eternal and immutable purpose. This appears from the perfection of the divine nature, and from the express declaration of scripture. The apostle tells us that God created all things by Jesus Christ, "according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now it is easy to see that, when God had determined all things, he could foreknow all things. He must have known his own determinations, and, by knowing them, he must have foreknown whatever would come to pass; for he made his determinations in unerring wisdom and perfect goodness, and of course could never see any reason to alter them; and he knew his own omnipotent power to carry into execution all his purposes. It was as easy for him to foreknow all things, as to determine all things. His foreknowledge, in this view of it, was founded on his decree, and upon nothing else. If he had not decreed any thing, he could not have foreknown any thing. If he had not decreed to make the world, he could not have foreknown that the world would exist. If he had not decreed to create angels and men, he could not have foreknown that they would exist. If he had not decreed to work in them both to will and to do, he could not have foreknown how they would always act. If he had not decreed what should be their character and condition, he could not have foreknown their character and condition through every period of their existence. As his foreknowledge was founded on his decree, so it must of necessity be bounded by it. It cannot extend to any thing but what is decreed. God's essential attribute of knowledge extends to all things possible; but his foreknowledge extends to nothing but what has existed and what will exist. God's foreknowledge is not an essential

attribute, but the fruit or effect of his decree, as much as the works of his hands. It is altogether owing to men's not making this distinction, that any have supposed that God could foreknow all things without decreeing all things. They say God is omniscient, and his omniscience is a necessary and essential attribute of his nature. But who can rationally suppose that his essential attribute of omniscience would enable him to foreknow what was impossible to be foreknown? It was impossible for him to foreknow his own purposes before he had formed them; and equally impossible to foreknow the effects of his purposes before his purposes existed. There was one way, and but one, in which God could foreknow all things from eternity, and that was, by decreeing all things from eternity. Those who would account for the foreknowledge of God without his decrees, have always found the subject dark and incomprehensible. But there is nothing dark, unintelligible, or incomprehensible, in the foreknowledge of God as founded on his decrees. If God formed all his purposes from eternity, he must necessarily have known all things from the beginning of the world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God's foreknowledge is founded on his decrees, then it is absurd for any to believe and to approve of his foreknowledge, and yet deny his decrees. There are very many among all denominations of christians, who run into this absurdity. They profess to believe that God foreknew all things from eternity, but yet deny that he determined, ordained, or decreed whatsoever comes to pass. A few indeed have so sensibly felt the force of the argument in favor of the divine decrees, drawn from the foreknowledge of God, that they have actually denied his foreknowledge in order to avoid acknowledging his decrees. But the foreknowledge of God is so plain from scripture and reason, that it is almost universally acknowledged to be true, even by those who deny his decrees. Mr. Locke, and some of the most learned divines who have denied the doctrine of the decrees, have yet been constrained to acknowledge that they could not answer the argument in favor of the divine decrees, which is drawn from the divine foreknowledge. If it be true, as has been perhaps sufficiently proved already, that God could not foreknow all things from eternity without decreeing all things from eternity, then those who acknowledge that God foreknew all things from eternity must, to be consistent, acknowledge that he decreed all things from eternity. But how often do we hear those who disbelieve, deny and oppose

the doctrine of divine decrees, freely acknowledge that they believe and maintain the foreknowledge of God! This is no less absurd than to believe that there may be an effect without a cause. For if the foreknowledge of God be not founded upon his decrees, it has no foundation; it is an effect without a cause. It is strange indeed, that men of common sense, and of more than common learning, should fall into this absurd mode of thinking. There can be but one way to account for it; and that is, the strong and irreconcilable opposition of the natural heart to the divine decrees. If men were willing that God should decree all things, they would be willing to believe that his foreknowing all things demonstrates the certainty of his having actually decreed all things. It is consistent in those who deny the foreknowledge of God to deny that his decrees can be proved from it; but it is absurd in those who believe the foreknowledge of God to deny that it demonstrably proves his decrees; for it is impossible to see how God could foreknow all things, unless he had decreed all things.

2. If the foreknowledge of God is founded on his decrees, then it is absurd for any to believe that his foreknowledge extends any farther than his decrees. It is believed by many, that God determined all his own conduct from eternity, and of course, that he certainly foreknew all his own operations in creating, governing and redeeming the world, and in disposing of his rational creatures through every period of their existence. But they deny that he decreed the character and conduct of either angels or men, and at the same time acknowledge that he foreknew the character and conduct of the whole intelligent creation. By acknowledging that God foreknew all things, they implicitly acknowledge that he foreknew the thoughts, the feelings, and the free, voluntary actions of every intelligent creature in the universe. Though it be easy to see that he could foreknow his own conduct which he had determined, yet it is hard to see how he could foreknow the thoughts, and words, and voluntary conduct of all his intelligent creatures, which it is supposed he had not decreed. All these things, it is acknowledged, God perfectly foreknew; though it is contended he had not decreed them. But who can reconcile the belief of such persons with their unbelief? They believe that God's foreknowledge of his own conduct was founded on his purposes, but disbelieve that his foreknowledge of the conduct of his creatures was founded upon his decreeing their conduct. Their belief is built upon a plain and firm foundation; but their unbelief is founded upon no evidence. They have no evidence that God did or could foreknow the volitions, actions, and final state of mankind, without decreeing all these things.

They deny that God decreed the character, conduct and doom of Judas and Pharaoh, but acknowledge that he foreknew their character, conduct and doom. This they are constrained to acknowledge, because they are expressly told that God predicted the character, conduct and doom of these two men in particular. For the same reason, they are bound to acknowledge that God foreknew the character, conduct and doom of all that have been and will be finally lost; and yet they deny that he decreed the character, conduct and doom of the finally miserable. Thus they extend the foreknowledge of God far, unspeakably far, beyond his decrees, without any reason, and in opposition to moral demonstration. For it may be, and often has been, morally demonstrated, that God's foreknowledge is founded on his decrees, and absolutely limited by them. It is a palpable absurdity to extend the foreknowledge of God beyond his decrees. It is the same as to suppose that God perfectly foreknew from eternity what would come to pass, when he knew that it would not come to pass.

3. If God's foreknowledge is founded on his decrees, then it is absurd to believe and maintain that they are one and the same thing, and that there is no distinction between them. This is believed and maintained by many among the learned and unlearned. A late celebrated divine has taught that there is no distinction between the foreknowledge and the decrees of God. He considers the duration of God's existence as one *eternal now*, and all his knowledge as always present, and always essential to his necessary existence. So that there never was a possibility of a distinction between his essential knowledge and his foreknowledge. Though there are many things in God, who is a self-existent and eternal Being, that we do not know, yet there are some things in him which we do know. We do know that he is a moral agent, or acts from rational motives. Though we do not know wherein God's necessary and self existence consists, yet we do know wherein his perfect wisdom consists. It is certain to a demonstration, that it consists in proposing the best ends, and in appointing the best means to accomplish them. It is certain, therefore, that if God were infinitely wise from eternity, he decreed all things from eternity, and that his decrees must have been prior to, and distinct from, his foreknowing all things. It is one thing for a man to build a house, and another thing for him to know that he has determined to build a house. And it is impossible that he should know that he has determined to build a house, before he has determined to build one. The apostle saith, "Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." It was as impossible for God to know that he would build all things

before he had determined to build all things, as for a man to know that he has determined to build a house, before he had determined to do it. It is absolutely certain, therefore, that the decrees of God and his foreknowledge of all things are not one and the same, but really and necessarily distinct. It is true that God's foreknowledge and decrees are intimately and inseparably connected; and that his foreknowledge as really proves the certainty of all things future, as his decrees. But his foreknowledge has no tendency to make future things certain, which his decrees have. They make future things certain; for it is God's decreeing future things which makes them certain. His decrees fix an inseparable connection between the ends proposed and the means to accomplish them; and this connection produces an absolute certainty of all things which are decreed, and lays the permanent foundation of God's foreknowledge; but at the same time demonstrably proves that the foreknowledge of God and his decrees are entirely different and distinct.

4. If God's foreknowledge is founded on his decrees, then it is absurd to blend his foreknowledge and decrees with his agency. This is totally distinct from his foreknowledge and decrees; for it makes things not only certain, but necessary. Foreknowledge does not make any thing certain; the decrees do make every thing certain; but it is the divine agency alone that makes every thing necessary, or which brings to pass the actual existence of every thing. The common complaint against both the foreknowledge and decrees of God is, that they make things not only certain, but necessary, and that on this account, they are inconsistent with free agency. But neither the foreknowledge nor decrees of God have any influence at all upon the actions of men, as distinct from divine agency. Neither has the foreknowledge, nor have the decrees of God, the least tendency to make men act, or to prevent their acting. While the knowledge and purposes of God lie in his own mind, they have no more influence upon mankind than if they did not exist. It is his agency, and nothing but his agency, that makes men act and prevents them from acting. If there be any ground of complaint against God, it must be because he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and causes men to act according to his foreknowledge and decrees. If his agency, therefore, is not inconsistent with their agency, or does not prevent them from acting just as they please, it is clear that they have no reason to complain; and that his agency does not, in fact, infringe upon their agency, they intuitively know from their own consciousness. They take pains to blend the foreknowledge, the decrees, and the agency of God to-

gether, in order to cast the blame of their own conduct upon God, and exculpate themselves. If they would take as much pains to see the consistency of these things, as not to see their consistency, all their darkness, difficulties, and complaints, would undoubtedly vanish. These things are true and consistent; and though they will not see their consistency in this world, they must see their consistency in another world, when their knowledge may be a source of endless sorrow instead of endless joy. It is of infinite importance to know and love the truth respecting these serious, sublime, and interesting subjects.

5. If God's foreknowledge, decrees and agency are inseparably connected, then it is absurd to suppose that he can bring about any event in a manner and by means different from what he eternally decreed and foresaw. Peter, on a certain occasion, said to the men of Israel, "Hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." It has been supposed and published, that notwithstanding the decree and foreknowledge of God, respecting the crucifixion of Christ by the instrumentality of Judas and other wicked men, he might have brought about that great event by other men and other means. It is granted that this was naturally possible; but who can rationally suppose that it was morally possible? It was morally impossible for God to falsify his word, and it is no less morally impossible for God to act contrary to his own foreknowledge and decree. As it was morally impossible for God to have brought about the death of Christ in any other way, or by any other means, than those which were agreeable to his foreknowledge and decree, so it is morally impossible for him, in any other case, to bring about an event contrary to his foreknowledge and decree. God is under a moral necessity of acting in all cases just as he determined to act from eternity; or to work all things after the counsel of his own will.

6. If God's foreknowledge and decrees lie at the foundation of all his works from eternity to eternity, then they lie at the foundation of all natural and revealed religion. The simple belief of the being and perfections of God can lay no person under obligation to love and serve him, or to trust in him and be thankful to him. Divest him of his eternal purposes, and he is no longer to be loved or obeyed for any thing in the works of creation, providence and redemption. If he had not an eternal and benevolent purpose in creating, governing, and redeeming the world, he has no claim upon the love, or gratitude,

or obedience, or submission of mankind. It is his wise and benevolent purpose, in creating and disposing of all things, which lays the whole intelligent creation under indispensable obligations to love, obey and submit to their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. It is impossible for any man to be religious, who does not believe in the being, perfections, and purposes of God. He can neither love, nor fear, nor exercise any other religious affection. If God has nothing to do with him, he can have nothing to do with God. Hence, says Solomon: "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." It is the perfection and immutability of the purposes of God, that render him an object of religious worship and of every religious affection. If any doctrines are fundamental, are not these so?

7. If God's foreknowledge and decrees are both true and inseparably connected, then these truths ought to be properly explained, and forcibly inculcated; not only because they are truths highly important and pleasing in themselves, but because they give meaning and force to all other doctrines and duties of religion. If these truths are not believed and felt, no other truths can have much influence upon the hearts and lives of men. This is evident from the nature of these truths, and from observation and experience. Do they who deny the foreknowledge and decrees of God appear to pay a proper regard to the doctrines and duties of piety?

8. If God's foreknowledge and decrees are inseparably connected, and God will always act agreeably to them, then all men have abundant reason to rejoice in him. For he will certainly treat every person in the world and every person in the universe, as well, as infinite wisdom, power and goodness can treat them. And who can reasonably desire that he should treat them better than this? Those who believe and love the foreknowledge and decrees of God, do rejoice in him, and derive the highest enjoyment from his purposes and promises to promote his own glory, and the highest good of them who love and fear him, and rejoice in him. And if any do not rejoice in God, let them believe and love his promises, and they cannot fail to rejoice and be happy; and this is their immediate duty.

ESSAY XX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE DECREES THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.

The best definition of the doctrine of God's decrees that ever has been given, and perhaps the best that can be given, is found in the Westminster Catechism. In answer to the question, "What are the decrees of God?" it is said, "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." In eternity it depended entirely upon the determination of God, whether any other being should ever exist; because no other being could exist without his power and agency. His determination, therefore, must infallibly have foreordained whatever should come to pass. Of all events which were possible, the decrees of God rendered the existence of whatever comes to pass absolutely certain. God did not decree things because he saw that they would exist; but because he saw that they would not exist without his decrees. His decrees respected all future events, and precisely in the same manner, to make their existence certain. He decreed the existence, the character, the conduct and the state, of all moral beings, both in time and eternity. He decreed that some should be the monuments of his goodness, some the monuments of his justice, and some the monuments of his mercy. And he decreed all the means by which his rational creatures should be brought to their final and eternal condition. In his decrees, which respect all his creatures and all events, God had a supreme regard to his own glory, which is the greatest and best object that ever can exist. Nothing more and

nothing less than what is now stated is to be understood by the doctrine of divine decrees.

It is now proposed to show that this doctrine is true. To prove this doctrine, I might draw my first argument from the foreknowledge of God. James declares that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." And it is generally allowed that God foreknows all future events. From this divine foreknowledge, it might be easily demonstrated that God has decreed all things that ever have or ever will come to pass. I might draw a second argument in favor of the doctrine of divine decrees, from explicit declarations of scripture concerning the purpose of God, and the eternal counsel of his own will, respecting all his creatures and all their actions. But I will waive the consideration of these arguments, and insist only on a third argument, which may be drawn from the infinite wisdom of God.

It is universally granted that God is a being of infinite wisdom. But no wise being can begin to act, until he has determined what to do. To act without design, and without a good design, is the very essence of folly. But to act with design, and with a good design, is the very essence of wisdom. Hence it follows that God must have decreed all things, as the foundation of his beginning to act. He must have laid the foundation before he began to erect the superstructure. And he must have laid the foundation exactly according to the length, and breadth, and height of the edifice. Or, to speak without a figure, God must have determined in his own mind his whole system of conduct before he began to act. Without such a determination, it was impossible that his works should be absolutely perfect. If he had left any one thing undetermined, it might have frustrated his whole design. There are but two reasons why the works of men are imperfect. One is, that they are too ignorant to form a perfect plan. And the other is, that they are too weak to accomplish the plan they may form. But God can do any thing. He can accomplish any plan he forms, and he can form the best plan that is possible. Hence, knowing his own power and wisdom, he must have formed the most perfect plan before he began to operate. His infinite wisdom would not permit him to begin the work of creation, until he had decreed the nature, the number, the use and end of all created objects. The decrees of God must be the foundation of all his works. This is as certain as that he is the only wise God.

But I proceed to my main object, which is to show that the doctrine of the divine decrees is the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The other essential doctrines of the gospel are

founded upon the doctrine of divine decrees, and are supported by it. To deny or disprove this doctrine would be to deny or disprove the whole gospel. Every system of sentiments has some fundamental principle, without which it cannot exist. The fundamental principle in the Newtonian philosophy is, that no material body has a tendency to move of itself, without an external cause of motion. For remove this principle, and the Newtonian philosophy can be entirely overthrown. The first principle in civil government is, that all men have natural rights, which they ought to enjoy so far as is consistent with the general good of society. For remove this principle, and there will remain no foundation for civil government. The first principle in the scheme of salvation according to the gospel is, that God has decreed all things from eternity. For remove this doctrine, and no doctrine of the gospel can be maintained; there remains no foundation to support the gospel. The doctrine of divine decrees, therefore, lies at the foundation of the gospel, and supports all its essential doctrines. But I will enter more particularly into this subject, and mention a number of the most essential doctrines of the gospel, which wholly depend upon the doctrine of divine decrees.

1. It is a doctrine of the gospel, that God has a moral character, which is perfectly holy and amiable. We read that God is love; that he is good to all; that he is just and gracious. These are moral qualities, which form the most amiable moral character. But we cannot conceive that these moral perfections should belong to God, unless he has some purposes and designs. Take from God his decrees or intentions, and we cannot conceive that he would sustain any moral character; and much less a moral character of perfect goodness. There can be no goodness without good purposes and designs. And if God has never formed any good purposes, he has never exercised any real holiness, or goodness. Hence, Bolingbroke and other deists, who deny the decrees of God, equally deny his moral perfections. And in this respect they are consistent with themselves. For if God has never formed any purposes, he has never formed a good moral character. The doctrine of divine decrees is, therefore, fundamental to the doctrine of the moral perfection of God.

2. It is a doctrine of the gospel, that the scriptures were written under divine inspiration. But how could God inspire the sacred writers to record those predictions which are contained in the Bible, if he had not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass? The Bible abounds in predictions of great, distant and important events. We find the prediction, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; that the old world

should be destroyed in a hundred and twenty years; that the seed of Abraham should be strangers in a strange land four hundred years; that the Jews should go into captivity in Babylon for seventy years; that after three score and two weeks Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself; that the Persians should destroy the Babylonians, the Greeks the Persians, and the Romans the Greeks; that Jerusalem should be totally destroyed, and the Jews scattered among all nations; and that Christ shall reign on earth a thousand years. These and many other great events have been foretold by the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles. But God could not inspire them to foretell these events, unless he had decreed that they should certainly take place. To deny the decrees of God is, therefore, to deny that the Bible is his word. If God has not decreed all things, it can be demonstrated that the scriptures are a cunningly devised fable.

3. It is an essential doctrine of the gospel, that Christ died on the cross to make an atonement for sin. But there is no truth in this doctrine, unless God decreed to save sinners. For Christ professed to come in the name of his Father, to obey his Father, and to die at the express command of his Father. But if his Father never decreed the salvation of sinners, it is certain that his Father never sent him, and never commanded him to die in the room of sinners; so that Christ is found a false witness. And then, though he died on the cross, his death could make no atonement, and be of no avail to the salvation of sinners. But if he died according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; if he was obedient to his Father, even unto the death of the cross; then his dying, the just for the unjust, may avail to bring sinners unto God. The truth of Christ's mission, and the value of his death, depend upon the doctrine of the divine decrees. And the denial of this doctrine is virtually and necessarily the denial of the atonement of Christ, and the whole glory of the gospel.

4. It is a doctrine of the gospel, that multitudes, in future time, shall cordially embrace it. Our Lord spake many parables to illustrate the future prevalence of the gospel, and its happy influence upon the hearts of men. But there cannot be the smallest evidence that any sinner ever will embrace the gospel without the special grace of God. For all mankind naturally oppose the gospel, and reject it, as long as they can. And they can reject it, as long as their carnal mind remains. But there is no evidence that God will exercise his special grace for the salvation of sinners, if he has not decreed to save any of mankind. And it may be demonstrated that no impenitent sinner will ever be brought to repentance, if God has not de-

creed to sanctify any of the human race. The doctrine of regeneration depends upon the doctrine of election, or the divine decrees. To deny this doctrine, amounts to the denial that God ever has renewed, and that he ever will renew, one of the depraved children of men. If God has not decreed to renew any person, it can be demonstrated that no person ever has been or ever will be renewed. But if God has decreed to save some of the human race, then it may be demonstrated that he will renew those whom he has determined to save. Accordingly the apostle says, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." The doctrine of regeneration is therefore founded upon the doctrine of election.

5. It is a doctrine of the gospel, that they who are renewed shall certainly persevere in holiness, and be conducted to heaven. Unto the saints at Philippi the apostle says, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." They who are once renewed shall, according to the gospel, be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation. But this doctrine of the gospel depends upon the eternal purpose of God to save a certain number of mankind. For if this purpose be denied, it amounts to a denial that any saint will finally persevere. Without the doctrine of election, it cannot be proved that God will conduct a single saint to heaven. But it can be demonstrated that he will not do it. For certainly he will never conduct a saint to heaven without determining to do it. And it is now too late for a being of infinite wisdom to form any new purpose. But if God has decreed to save a certain number of mankind, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, then those whom he has renewed and caused to believe the truth, he will conduct to the kingdom of heaven. The doctrine of divine decrees is the only and the complete foundation for the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints.

6. It is a doctrine of the gospel, that they who persevere in holiness shall be completely and for ever happy. But the complete and eternal happiness of saints in a future state depends upon the doctrine of divine decrees. If God has not decreed what their state shall be in eternity, it cannot be proved that the happiness of heaven will not come to a final end. God does not know, nor can any creature know, that saints shall be happy in heaven for ever, unless God has decreed it. But if he has decreed that all things in heaven and earth and all worlds shall work together for good to them that love him and are called according to his purpose, then it can be known that the joys of heaven will never cease. Hence the certainty of the

future and eternal happiness of holy creatures depends entirely upon the doctrine of divine decrees.

7. It is a plain doctrine of the gospel, that they who die in their sins shall be finally and eternally lost. But this doctrine depends upon their being ordained to eternal destruction. For if God has not decreed that the finally impenitent shall be eternally miserable, it cannot be proved that their punishment will never cease. Nor does even God himself know but he may release them from the pains of hell and raise them to the joys of heaven in some future period. But if they shall be condemned to that everlasting punishment to which they were appointed from eternity, then it is certain that their miseries will never end. The doctrine of eternal punishment, therefore, depends upon the doctrine of the divine decrees.

8. The general resurrection is clearly taught in the gospel. But this doctrine is founded upon the decrees of God. Hymeneus and Philetus denied the general resurrection; and all must deny it who deny the doctrine of divine decrees. For how can it be proved that, in some distant period, God will raise all who are in their graves to a reunion of soul and body, unless he has decreed to do it? This great doctrine of the gospel depends upon the divine decrees, which alone render it worthy of universal belief.

9. The gospel abundantly teaches us that all things shall eventually terminate in the glory of God, and in the highest good of the universe. But the truth of this doctrine depends upon the decrees of God. For if he has not decreed all things in the universe, and absolutely fixed every event, it cannot be certain that all things will terminate either in his glory or in the highest happiness of moral beings. Indeed, upon this supposition it is absolutely uncertain how things will terminate. They may, for aught that can be known by God or man, terminate in the complete and endless misery of the universe. But if God has decreed all things, and made all things for himself, then it is certain that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things;" and they shall be to his eternal glory. It is the doctrine of divine decrees which supports the joyful doctrine that all things in the universe shall terminate well. I will only add,

10. That it is a duty enjoined upon all men to confide and rejoice in the divine government. But the decrees of God are the only proper foundation of this duty. It is written: "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." But what foundation can there be for this injunction, if God has not determined to govern the universe in the wisest and best manner? If he reigns without

law and without design, if he does not direct all things to his own glory and the greatest good, what just cause have any of mankind to rejoice that he rules in the armies of heaven, and among the nations of the earth? It is certainly a just cause for mourning rather than rejoicing, that the Lord reigns, unless he has foreordained all things to promote his glory, and the highest good of his rational creatures; and, in his universal providence, seeks that great and noble design. But if God has decreed all things for his own glory, and the highest good of the universe, then he is a worthy object of supreme affection, confidence and delight. Then all his creatures have infinite reason to rejoice that God reigns and will for ever reign. Thus the decrees of God are the foundation of all his works, and the foundation of all the doctrines of the gospel, and the foundation of all the happiness of saints and angels. The whole gospel and the whole happiness of the universe depend upon the doctrine that God has, according to the counsel of his own will, for his own glory foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. This very important and interesting subject, suggests the following remarks.

1. Ministers of the gospel ought, plainly and fully, to preach the doctrine of divine decrees. It is impossible to explain the doctrines and duties of the gospel, without explaining the decrees of God, which are their foundation and support. The doctrine of divine decrees is the light, strength and glory of the whole gospel. With this doctrine the whole system of divine truth must stand or fall. This doctrine, then, is to be plainly and fully preached, if ministers would teach their hearers any thing of the gospel in its real design, origin, connections and consequences. It is exceedingly important that preachers and hearers should, in their views and feelings, ascend to the infinite and eternal fountain from which all the blessings of the gospel flow. This fountain is the purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus. If pastors would lead their flocks to the purest and sweetest waters of life, they must in their instructions trace every thing to the decrees of God. In his decrees they will perceive the union of infinite knowledge, wisdom, power and goodness engaged for the accomplishment of the greatest, wisest and best objects. And the knowledge of his decrees will spread a bright and pleasant light over all the dark and painful scenes of earth and time. It will give importance and beauty to the existence of every object and event in the universe. It gives to the gospel a magnitude and sublimity, that extend from eternity to eternity. If then the ministers of the gospel would promote their own knowledge, holiness and happiness, the instruction and edification of real christians, and

the repentance and salvation of sinners, they must plainly and fully exhibit the doctrine of divine decrees, which are the eternal and immutable foundation of the whole gospel. This doctrine had the first and highest place in the instructions of the apostle. In his epistle to the saints at Rome, he ascends from stream to stream, until he reaches the fountain of divine knowledge, wisdom and goodness in the eternal purposes of God. And there his spirit rests and triumphs, in the face of every foe. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" With what enlargement, purity and gratitude of affections does he begin his epistle to the saints at Ephesus: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace;—being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." It is when the apostle dwells on the doctrine of the divine decrees, that he appears to comprehend what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; to be filled with all the fulness of God. And now, if the preachers of the gospel would strip error of every deceitful appearance, give their instructions a divine importance and energy, establish the children of God upon the foundation of everlasting consolation and happiness, and destroy every dangerous and destructive refuge of sinners, they must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. They must plainly and fully exhibit the greatness, the wisdom, and the goodness of the divine decrees; and by the light of those decrees show their hearers that the whole earth is filled with the glory of God; and that God will be exalted and glorified by every creature and every event in the universe.

2. If the doctrine of divine decrees is the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, then it is easy to understand the gospel. This first principle of the gospel is perfectly simple and plain. The doctrine of God's decrees is as evident, as rational, and as scriptural, as any doctrine that respects his existence, perfections, agency and blessedness. And certainly there is no other doctrine of the gospel that is more easily explained and understood than the doctrine of divine decrees. Indeed, while this

doctrine is not explained and understood, it is impossible to understand, explain, or even to support, any other doctrine of the gospel. But let this doctrine, which is perfectly simple and plain, be understood, and it is easy to understand all the other doctrines of divine truth. This doctrine is light itself, and it casts a clear and pleasant light upon the whole gospel, and upon all the works and ways of God. They who cannot understand the gospel upon the foundation of divine decrees, cannot understand it upon any other foundation; for the gospel has no other foundation. It is by disregarding, obscuring, denying and opposing this doctrine, which is the foundation of the gospel, that ignorance of divine subjects has so rapidly increased, and extensively prevailed in this land, for a number of years. And by the same means the way has been opened for the increasing and prevailing floods of error, which still rise and spread, and sweep such multitudes, with high hopes of heaven, into the broad way to endless wo and despair. They who refuse to understand the doctrine of divine decrees, on which the whole gospel rests, cannot possibly understand any of its doctrines, duties, or blessings. But they will be involved in the darkness of ignorance, or be bewildered in the labyrinths of error and deceit. But they who are in such a state, choose darkness rather than light; for it is easy to understand the gospel, which is wholly founded on the plain and simple fact that God has, for his own glory, foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

3. Every scheme of religion, which excludes the doctrine of divine decrees, is essentially and fundamentally erroneous. No two schemes of doctrine can be more opposite than these two; one that includes, and one that excludes, the doctrine of divine decrees. If God has not decreed all things, it is abundantly evident that the gospel has no foundation. Since the decrees of God are the foundation of the gospel, every scheme of religion which excludes and rejects the doctrine of decrees is fundamentally erroneous and deceitful. If God did not decree all things in the eternal counsel of his own will, there is no reason to believe that he has ever done any thing. For it is absurd to suppose that he should act without a determination to act. The first Cause of all things must have decreed all things. If God has not decreed, he has not caused all things. And if he has not caused all things, what reason is there to believe that he has caused any thing? If he has not caused any thing and every thing, what reason is there to believe that he exists? And if God does not exist, what reason is there to believe that any thing exists? There is no rational and consistent medium between the doctrine of the divine decrees, and universal skepticism. If this doctrine be not true, what is true?

Let this doctrine be renounced and overthrown, and there remains nothing of any real importance or solidity in the universe. It is written, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." And can he be less unwise, who says with his tongue, there is a God, and yet denies the doctrine of his decrees? But who, that has any wisdom and goodness, can wish that this doctrine, which is the very foundation of the gospel, and of the whole glory of the universe, were untrue? Every scheme of doctrine which excludes the decrees of God subverts the whole gospel, and strikes at the foundation of rational and revealed religion. And it must be essentially and fundamentally erroneous.

4. They who reject the doctrine of divine decrees must, to be consistent, wholly reject the gospel. The decrees of God exactly agree with his character, and perfectly exhibit his eternal and infinite greatness and goodness. They who oppose and reject the decrees of God, oppose and reject his real character. The whole conduct of God, in the wonders of creation, providence, and redemption, agrees exactly with his decrees. They who oppose and reject the decrees of God, oppose and reject his wise, holy, and sovereign agency. The decrees of God are his glory, and they who reject his decrees reject his glory. And when the character, conduct, and glory of God are rejected, what can be seen of God, either in creation, providence, or redemption? It is absurd to suppose that any thing of the gospel of the grace of God can be supported, when his decrees, which are the foundation of the gospel, are rejected from the system of divine truth. Many persons, and not a small number of professed teachers of divine truth, can trace their declension and apostacy from sound doctrine to the rejection of the doctrine of divine decrees. Being displeased by this doctrine, they have turned from the infinite holiness and sovereignty of the living and true God. They have next turned from the divinity, mediation, and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have then rejected the sovereign and special influence of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of sinners. They have then discarded the essential difference between saints and sinners. They have then denied the doctrine of future and eternal rewards and punishments. They have next discarded the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. And having renounced in reality, if not in profession, the light of divine truth, they have groped at noonday as in the night; and have groped as though they had no eyes. Now can it be fully and clearly denied, that such persons as reject the doctrine of divine decrees, act consistently with themselves in their declension and apostacy from every doctrine of the gospel? Having

rejected the foundation, how can they support any part of the superstructure? It is utterly impossible for such persons as reject the doctrine of divine decrees to maintain, systematically and consistently, any doctrine of the gospel.

5. It concerns all persons to attend seriously and candidly to the doctrine of divine decrees, in reference to their own character and condition. No person can be indifferent in respect to this subject. It brings God near to us, and places us, with all our interests, in his holy and sovereign hand. Nor is there any thing in the gospel which is wholly founded on the decrees of God, that can take us from the hand of our holy and sovereign Creator. Is it, then, the comfort and joy of our hearts, that God will deal with us, and dispose of us for ever, according to his eternal decrees? Can we perform any duty, can we have any true joy, or peace, or life, while our hearts rise against God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?" Can we imagine that we love the gospel, while we reject and hate the doctrine of divine decrees, which are the eternal and immovable foundation of the whole gospel of the grace of God? Let no one deceive himself; and let no one be deceived by the vain and false notions of such religious professors, and of such professed teachers of the gospel, as oppose and reject the very foundation on which the whole gospel rests.

SERMON XXI.

THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD THE ONLY RULE OF DUTY.

THE secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.—DEUT. xxix. 29.

IT is a mark of the moral depravity of mankind, that they are generally more inquisitive to know their fortune, than to know their duty. They are much more solicitous to know what God intends, than what he requires. He has told them their duty, which they do not desire to know; but he has not told them their fortune, which they are fond of being told. This general propensity to know futurity has led the great mass of mankind, from age to age, to practice the grossest idolatry. When God led his people Israel out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, he gave them his written law at Mount Sinai, to prevent their conforming to the idolatrous nations through whom he was leading them, and among whom he was about to fix their permanent residence. This law they publicly and solemnly engaged to keep, at the very time it was given. But God knew their native propensity to disregard their most sacred vows and engagements, and therefore he commanded them to renew their covenant to obey his revealed will just before they entered into the land of promise. But still farther to guard them against seeking to magicians, astrologers, or soothsayers, to know things which God had not seen fit to reveal, Moses gave them the admonition in the text. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The plain meaning of Moses is,

That the revealed will of God, and not his secret will, is the rule of duty. I shall,

I. Consider what the secret will of God respects.

II. Consider what his revealed will respects. And,

III. Show that his revealed will, and not his secret will, is the rule of duty.

I. We are to consider what the secret will of God respects. The text supposes that there are secret things in the mind of the Deity which he has not revealed; or that he has secret designs concerning future events, which he intends shall remain undisclosed until they are actually accomplished. Before the foundation of the world, he formed in his own mind a complete scheme of his own conduct through all future ages. This scheme comprehended all things that ever have been and ever will be brought into existence. His secret will solely respects the taking place of those things which he determined from eternity should take place, without any regard to the nature of them, whether morally good, or morally evil. It was his secret will that not only holiness and happiness, but that sin and misery also, should take place among his intelligent creatures. Though he loved only holiness and happiness, and perfectly hated sin and misery, yet he determined that both should take place. It was his secret will that Lucifer should rebel, and Adam should disobey, though he hated both the rebellion of Lucifer and the disobedience of Adam. It was his secret will that Judas should betray and Peter should deny Christ, though he hated the conduct of both Judas and Peter. It is his secret will that all the elect shall repent and believe, and that all the non-elect shall live and die in impenitence and unbelief, though he loves faith and repentance, and hates impenitence and unbelief. It always was, and is, and will be, his secret will that all things shall take place which he sees will best promote his own glory and the highest good of the universe, whether they are good or evil, right or wrong, in their own nature. The Assembly of divines have given a just and accurate definition of God's secret will. It is "the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." His secret will entirely respects his decree, his purpose, his intention, or his determination, concerning the actual existence, or the actual taking place, of all things, in both the natural and moral world. Let us now consider,

II. What the revealed will of God respects. It respects something very different from what his secret will respects. It respects what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, or what is duty and sin, without any regard to the taking place of these things. God has revealed in his word what is agreeable and disagreeable to him, in its own nature. His precepts re-

quire nothing but what is right and pleasing to him; and his prohibitions forbid nothing but what is morally wrong and displeasing to him. He has declared in his word that he shall be pleased with men if they are holy, but displeased with them if they are unholy. He has declared in his word that he will reward men if they are holy, but if they are unholy he will punish them. In this sense, the precepts and prohibitions of the divine law are a transcript of the divine character, or in other words, are holy, just and good. When God requires men to love him with all the heart, he lets them know that it is his pleasure that they should love him with all the heart, but not that it is his secret or decretive will that they should love him with all the heart; for in some cases it is his secret will that they should not love him with all the heart. And when he threatens to punish them for not loving him with all the heart, he lets them know that it is his disposition to punish them, but not that it is his intention or design to punish them, for not loving him with all the heart; for in some cases it is his secret will or design to save them from the punishment which he has threatened to inflict upon them for disobedience. So that his precepts and prohibitions in his word do not respect his secret or decretive will at all. They have no respect to the taking place of things, whether good or evil; but only to what is morally right and morally wrong, or what is, in itself considered, agreeable and disagreeable to him. We come now,

III. To show that God's revealed will, and not his secret will, is the rule of duty. And this will appear, if we consider,

1. That God has revealed his will in his word for the very purpose of giving us a rule of duty. So Moses expressly declares in the text. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The law of God reveals to us what is pleasing and what is displeasing to him, and at the same time requires us to do what is pleasing and to avoid what is displeasing to him, which lays us under the strongest obligation to obedience. The law of God is a perfect rule of duty, and enforced by eternal rewards and punishments. This rule of duty is binding at all times and under all circumstances. No secret purpose, intention, or design of the Deity, can annul or diminish our obligation to obey this his revealed will.

2. The will of God revealed in his word is a complete rule of duty. The apostle asserts that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

After God has revealed his will to us in his word, we have no occasion for any farther information from him in respect to duty. So Moses told the people of God: "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." God's secret purposes concern his own conduct, not ours. It concerns him to do all that he determined to do from eternity, or to carry into effect all his wise and holy purposes; and it concerns us to do all that his holy word or revealed will requires us to do. We have no occasion for knowing his secret will in order to know his revealed will; for his revealed will does not depend upon his secret will, nor does our obligation to obey his revealed will depend upon our knowing his secret will. The obligation of a child to do what his parent requires, does not depend upon his knowing the secret will of his parent, or the reason why he commands him to do this or that lawful thing. The obligation of a subject to do what a civil ruler requires him to do, does not depend upon his knowing the reasons of state, or why the civil ruler requires certain acts of obedience. So the obligation of creatures to obey the revealed will of their Creator, does not depend upon their knowing his secret will, or the reasons of his commands. It is the revealed will of God, therefore, and not his secret will, which is our infallible rule of duty.

3. God's secret or decretal will cannot be known, and for that reason cannot be a rule of duty to any of his creatures. It is essential to a law, or rule of duty, that it should be published, or made known to those who are to be bound by it. So long as God conceals his own purposes in his own breast, they cannot bind his creatures to regard them, any more than if they did not exist in his mind. No human law can bind any human being before it is published, or made known, any more than it can bind before it is enacted. God has told us that he has reserved the times and seasons in his own power; which means that he has concealed most of his purposes respecting future events from the knowledge of his intelligent creatures. The angels in heaven know no more than we do with respect to the future conversion and salvation of sinners in this world. The decree of election and reprobation respecting sinners in time to come is a profound secret in the divine mind; and so is his secret will respecting thousands and millions of other future events. And whatever secret purposes God may have in his own mind concerning future events in this or any other world, these can be no rule of duty to us, or to any other of his intelligent creation. It is sufficient for us to know and to do his revealed will. His revealed will constantly and infinitely

binds us, let his secret will be what it may, respecting us or any other created beings.

4. Supposing God should reveal to us all his purposes respecting all his intelligent creatures in every part of the universe; this knowledge of his decretal will would be no rule of duty to us. His decretal will is only a rule of conduct for himself. It becomes him to do all that he has seen fit to determine to do; but our knowing what it becomes him to do cannot inform us what it is becoming us to do. Supposing God had revealed to Lucifer, the day before he rebelled, that he had determined or decreed that he should rebel the next day; would that knowledge of the decretal will of God have laid him under moral obligation to rebel, or destroyed his moral obligation to love and obey God for ever? Did Christ's telling Judas that he was the son of perdition, and that it was his decretal will that he should betray him, lay him under moral obligation to betray him, or lessen his guilt in betraying him? Or did Christ's telling Peter that he would deny him, and that it was his decretal will that he should deny him, lay him under moral obligation to deny him, or diminish his indispensable obligation to confess and own him before a frowning and opposing world? In these instances it is plain to the lowest capacity, that the decretal will of God was no rule of duty to Lucifer, Judas, or Peter. And it is equally plain that the decretal will of God can never be a rule of duty to any of his creatures. The decretal will of God cannot alter the nature of things, or make that right which in the nature of things is wrong, nor that wrong which in the nature of things is right. Though all the impenitent at the day of judgment will know that it is the decretal will of God that they shall be his enemies for ever, yet this knowledge of his decree cannot make it their duty to remain his enemies for ever. If all the decrees of God were universally known, they would be no rule of duty to angels or men, because his decrees have no respect to what is wrong, or right, but only to what it is wisest and best should take place. But his revealed will is a proper and infallible rule of duty, because it makes known what is right and wrong, and what is pleasing and displeasing to him, and what will promote and destroy eternal happiness. I may add,

5. That the secret will of God cannot, if it were known, be a rule of duty, because it is entirely destitute of both precept and penalty, and consequently of all divine authority. The decretal will of God does not require any thing, nor forbid any thing, nor promise any thing, nor threaten any thing. It has no legal properties, nor legal authority, force, or obligation. It does not manifest God's approbation or disapprobation of any person, action or event. This is certainly the case when it is not

known; and it is equally the case when it is known. God has, in some instances, revealed his secret purposes, and made known his eternal determination to bring about some events long before they took place. He revealed his secret, or decretal will that the posterity of Ham, Noah's youngest son, should be servants of servants unto the descendants of Shem and Japheth; but this was no rule of duty to the children of Shem and Japheth to tyrannize over the posterity of Ham, and make them servants of servants. It is as criminal for the posterity of Japheth now to enslave the Africans, as if God had never revealed his will, his purpose, or design, to subject them to bondage and slavery from generation to generation. God's revealing his decree that Issachar should crouch down between two burdens, was no rule of duty to him, or to his oppressors. God's revealing his will that Ishmael should be a wild man, and his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him, and that he should dwell in the presence of his brethren, to be a perpetual scourge to them, was no rule of duty to the Ishmaelites, and gave them no right to oppose, plunder and harass mankind from age to age. God's revealing his eternal purpose respecting the sufferings and death of Christ, by Jews and Gentiles, was no rule of duty to the chief priests, to Herod, to Pilate, to Judas, or to the soldiers, to do what they did to the Lord of glory. God's revealing his will concerning the rise of the Man of sin, and the subversion of his temporal and spiritual tyranny, is no rule of duty for France, or Britain, or Russia, or any other European nations, to wage war with Italy, ransack the city of Rome, and spread destruction and misery through the Pope's dominions, without any national provocation. All these instances, and numerous others that might be mentioned, clearly show that God's secret or decretal will is no rule of duty even after it is known, any more than before it is revealed. It is only a rule of the divine conduct, but no rule of human conduct. It has no precept, nor penalty, and is clothed with no divine authority. The conclusion is plain and irresistible, that the law of God, or his revealed will, is the only rule of duty to mankind.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God's secret will respects one object, and his revealed will respects another object, then there is no inconsistency between his secret and revealed will. It is one of the most plausible objections which has ever been made against the doctrine of divine decrees, that it is totally inconsistent with the preceptive or revealed will of God. It is said, that to suppose God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, necessarily

implies that he requires one thing, but decrees another; or that he forbids one thing, but decrees another. He required Pharaoh to let his people go, but decreed that he should not let them go. He has required all good men to be perfectly holy in this life, but has decreed that no man shall be perfectly holy in this life. He has required all men every where to repent, but has decreed that multitudes shall never repent. He has forbidden and threatened to punish all sin, but has decreed that all the sin which abounds in the world should take place. In all these instances it is said God's secret will is diametrically contrary to his revealed will. But how does this appear? God's secret will respects one thing, but his revealed will respects another. His secret will respects nothing but the existence or taking place of things; but his revealed will respects the nature or moral quality of the things that take place. He chooses that some things should exist which he perfectly hates, and he chooses some things should not exist which he perfectly loves in their own nature. He requires nothing but what he loves in its own nature, and he forbids nothing but what he hates in its own nature. His revealed will respects nothing but the moral good and evil in the things he requires and forbids. He required Pharaoh to let his people go, because this was right in the nature of things; but he decreed that he should not let his people go, not because it was right in Pharaoh not to let them go, but because it was best, all things considered, that he should not give them liberty to go. God requires all men to be perfectly holy in this life, because this is right in the nature of things; but he decrees that no man shall be perfectly holy in this life, because he knows it to be best, all things considered, that none should be perfectly holy before they leave the world. Holiness is one thing, and the taking place of holiness is another; and sin is one thing, and the taking place of sin is another. When God requires holiness, his preceptive or revealed will respects the nature or moral excellence of holiness; but when he decrees that holiness shall not take place, his secret or decretal will respects only the event of its not taking place. So when he forbids sin, his preceptive or revealed will respects only the nature or moral evil of sin; but when he decrees that it shall take place, his secret or decretal will respects merely its actual existence to answer some valuable purpose. Thus the secret and revealed will of God respect entirely different objects, and are by no means inconsistent. If they respected the same objects, it is granted they would be inconsistent. If God should require and forbid the same thing, or if he should decree that the same thing should and should not exist, his secret and revealed will would be totally contradictory and absurd. If those who pretend that the

secret and revealed will of God are inconsistent, would only make the same distinction in this case that they do in innumerable other cases, they could not discover a shadow of inconsistency between the secret and revealed will of God. How often do they themselves make a distinction between what is desirable in its own nature, and what is not desirable, all things considered? The fond and faithful parent does not desire, simply considered, to correct his offending child; but, all things considered, thinks it best, and decrees or determines to correct his child. And though he tells his child he does not desire to correct him, simply considered, but has determined it to be best, all things considered, to correct him, the child sees no inconsistency in what his father says and does. Just so the wise, holy and benevolent Parent of the universe may consistently decree to bring to pass things which he hates, forbids and condemns.

2. It appears from the representations which have been given of the secret and revealed will of God, that our text has often been perverted and misapplied. Because secret things belong unto God, but those only which are revealed belong unto us, many have been led to conclude and say that we have no right to believe and teach the doctrine of decrees, or the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, or the doctrine of reprobation, or the doctrine of divine agency in the production of moral exercises in the hearts of men, since these are secret things. It is true, all these things were once secret; but since they have been revealed they are no longer secret things. Is not the doctrine of decrees revealed? Is not the doctrine of election revealed? Is not the doctrine of reprobation revealed? Is not the doctrine of divine agency in the renovation of the heart revealed? Is not the doctrine of the divine agency in hardening the heart revealed? Is not the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints revealed? Who will presume to say that these doctrines are not revealed in the Bible, and were not taught by Christ and his apostles? These doctrines have long been disputed among almost all denominations of christians; but why should they be disputed, if they were not revealed in the sacred oracles? Or why should those who disbelieve them, employ so much learning, criticism and metaphysical ingenuity, in attempting to explain them away? The acknowledged truth is, that they are revealed in the Bible; and I will venture to add that they are as plainly revealed as any other doctrines in it. This being true, we have as good a right to examine, explain and inculcate these, as any other doctrines to be found in the word of God. These doctrines may be truly explained agreeably to the analogy of scripture and the dictates of the soundest reason; and all the subtile and plausible objec-

tions which have ever been made against them may be fairly and fully answered. And it is no evidence to the contrary, that we hear so many say that they have never heard them explained, and the objections answered to their apprehension and satisfaction. It is only saying of themselves what Christ said of some who heard him preach: "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."

3. If God's secret will respects the taking place of future events, then all uninspired men who pretend to reveal God's secret will, or to foretell future events, are guilty of both folly and falsehood. For secret things belong to God only, and he only can reveal them. He justly claims this supreme prerogative. "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." He challenges the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, either to foretell or to escape the public calamities which he secretly intended to bring upon his disobedient people. There are many in the pagan, and some in the christian world, who pretend to look into futurity, and foretell things which God has never revealed; but they are guilty of egregious folly and presumption, and ought to be avoided, despised and condemned. Pharaoh sought to the magicians to confront and oppose Moses, but all in vain. Belshazzar applied to such impostors, who were constrained to acknowledge their ignorance and folly. None by searching can find out God, nor discover his secret will in a single instance.

4. If God's secret will cannot be known, then it can have no influence upon the actions of men. They are extremely apt to complain of the doctrine of divine decrees, because they imagine it lays both a restraint and constraint upon their free and voluntary actions. They say, if God has decreed all things, then he constantly restrains them from doing any thing which he has not decreed, and as constantly constrains them to do every thing that he has decreed; so that his decrees totally destroy their free agency. But his decrees, which are his secret will, cannot possibly have the least influence to restrain them from acting, or to constrain them to act, for this plain reason; that they do not and cannot know what his secret will is, till after they have acted. While the decrees of God lie a secret in his own mind, they cannot have any more influence upon the actions of men than if they did not exist in his mind. The secret will of God, which is not known, never is or can be a motive to any person to do or not to do what is decreed. Judas did not know that it was decreed that he should betray Christ, before he had determined and agreed to do it, for thirty pieces of silver. It was the

money, and not the decree, that governed his free and voluntary act. Joseph's brethren did not know that it was decreed that they should sell him into Egypt, till after they had done it; so that they acted as freely and criminally as if it had not been decreed. Ask those who object against the divine decrees as being inconsistent with free agency, whether they ever felt restrained from doing any thing they pleased, by the secret will or decree of God, and they will frankly say that they never did feel any restraining influence from it. Or ask them whether they ever felt constrained by the secret will or decree of God to do any thing which they did not choose to do, and they will frankly say that they never did feel any overpowering or constraining influence from it. Neither scripture, nor reason, nor observation, nor experience, affords the least ground to object against the secret will or decrees of God, as being inconsistent with men's being altogether free and voluntary in all their actions.

5. But if God has a secret will respecting all future events, and will always act according to his secret will, then it is easy to see the real cause why mankind are generally so much opposed to the doctrine of divine decrees. It is entirely owing to their fears that he will execute his decrees, or bring to pass whatever he has decreed. This, they see, throws them into the sovereign hand of God, to dispose of them according to his eternal purpose which he formed before the foundation of the world. This is a most solemn and interesting truth, which every natural heart perfectly hates and opposes. If God can execute his decrees consistently with the perfect freedom of every moral agent, then he can cause every sinner to choose life or death, and be the free and voluntary instrument of his own salvation or destruction. And since God's secret will is unknown, no sinner can know whether he shall choose life or death, be holy or sinful, happy or miserable to all eternity. It is not the decrees of God which trouble sinners, but the agency of God in carrying them into effect, without their knowing what they are until they are fulfilled. By his invisible agency upon their minds, he governs all their views, all their thoughts, all their determinations, and all their volitions, just as he pleases, and just according to his secret will, or eternal purpose, which they neither know beforehand, nor can resist, evade, or frustrate. They sometimes call this fate, but it is something far more disagreeable to them than fate. If they were governed by fate, they would not be accountable for their conduct. But they are governed by a divine agency on their minds, which is not only wise, and holy, and powerful, but at the same time perfectly consistent with their own moral liberty and freedom. They are entirely and constantly under the control of divine

providence, which is God's most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions, according to his secret will. This secret will, for aught they know, may disappoint all their desires, all their hopes, all their expectations, and destroy all their happiness for ever. They know not but it is God's eternal, secret and irresistible will to make them vessels of wrath, fitted by their own free, sinful choice, for destruction. The carnal mind of every person in the state of nature rises in enmity and opposition to this secret will of God, is not reconciled to it, neither indeed can be. But if this be true, cries every sinner, what shall I do? My case is deplorably and desperately wretched. God has often told you so, but you would not believe it. Can you now believe otherwise? Can you believe that God has no secret will? Can you believe that he will not execute his secret will? Can you believe that your opposition to his secret will can frustrate it? Can you believe that God will give up his secret will to gratify your unsubmissive will? These, say you, are hard sayings. I hope they are not true. I will go to the Bible, and see if they are to be found there. I will go to God, and not to man, to tell me the truth. I beseech you to go, and I venture to say that if you do go, you will return converted, or condemned.

6. If God will certainly execute his wise and holy secret will, then all his friends have a constant source of joy under all circumstances of life. For he has assured them that in executing his secret will, he will cause all things to work together for their good. Though he may cause them to pass through dark and distressing scenes, yet he will never leave nor forsake them, but eventually bring them into light. It is his secret will to order all things in the wisest and best manner to promote his own glory and the perfect holiness and happiness of all who love him and place their supreme dependence upon him. None who have trusted in him, have ever found his faithfulness to fail. Those who have believed and loved the secret will of God, have found it to be an unfailing source of support, consolation and joy, under all the trials and afflictions which they were called to experience. Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Joshua, David and Samuel, Christ and the apostles, acknowledged the secret, governing will of God, and found it a solid foundation of hope and confidence under the singular trials which fell to their lot. That which so many call error, absurdity, and even blasphemy, they called the most important and consoling truth. And the same truth is still the ground of joy and peace to all who rejoice that the Lord reigneth. Indeed it would be absurd for any to rejoice in God, if they did not believe that he will govern all things exactly according to his secret and eternal purpose.

This all good men do believe, and therefore are bound to rejoice in that secret will of God which the men of the world hate and oppose with all their hearts. All the promises of the gospel are founded in the secret will of God, and consequently all the hopes of christians are derived from it. It is their duty and privilege to live by faith in the universal government of God, which he constantly exercises over all creatures, objects and events, agreeably to the secret and eternal counsel of his own will.

7. If God's secret will be his governing will, and respects the existence of every thing that comes to pass, then it is very criminal in any to deny, or to complain of, his secret will. It is the same thing as to deny that God governs the world, or to complain that he does not govern it in the wisest and best manner. Mankind seem to be very insensible of the great criminality of denying, or complaining of, the secret will of God. It is as criminal as to deny that he governs the world, or to deny that he reigns in righteousness. But who would not be shocked to hear any man say that God does not govern the world; or that he governs it very unwisely, unjustly, and erroneously? There were some in Ezekiel's day, who boldly said, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth." And there were many more, who boldly said, "The way of the Lord is not equal." Are there not at this day, two just such classes of people? one class, who boldly say that God has not an eternal secret will or decree respecting all future events, and does not govern all things according to his original and eternal decree, but leaves all the moral world to act independently without any divine control, and all the natural world to move on without his constant care and superintendency; and another class, who boldly say that "the way of the Lord is not equal," and he orders or suffers ten thousand things to take place which he ought not to order or suffer to exist. Must it not be highly displeasing to the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Governor of the world, to hear his rational, dependent, ungrateful and undutiful creatures thus boldly deny the reality and rectitude of his universal government over them? God may properly address all who use such language, as he addressed persons of the same character of old. "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; yet ye say, what have we spoken so much against thee?" To deny the reality and rectitude of God's wise, holy, universal government, is tantamount to denying all obligation to love him, to obey him, to trust in him, and to serve him. And is this a small offence? Is it not sinning directly against God himself? Is it not practically calling upon all the intelligent creation to rise up in open rebellion against

their Maker? These questions must, sooner or later, be answered by all who live under that government of God, which he exercises over all his creatures and works, according to his eternal and secret will. Can we justify ourselves in denying his secret will, or in complaining of it? God was highly displeased with those who murmured and perished in the wilderness. And he is still more displeased with those who murmur under greater light, and in the enjoyment of greater temporal and spiritual blessings.

Finally, this subject affords a just occasion for all to inquire whether they rejoice or regret that God always has, does now, and always will, govern them according to his secret will, or immutable purpose, which exists in his own mind from eternity. This question, were all intelligent creatures in the universe to speak their minds upon it sincerely and fully, would draw a line of distinction between all holy and unholy men and angels. And they will all finally be characterized and separated according to this essential distinction. Can there, then, be a more proper and important question proposed to the consideration of all intelligent creatures than this: whether they are willing that God should treat them through every period of their existence, just as he eternally determined in his own wise and holy mind to treat them? The question is perfectly plain and intelligible. And some, no doubt, have solemnly considered it, and cheerfully answered it in their own mind. Though they know that they once were entirely unwilling that God should dispose of them for ever agreeably to his fixed and eternal purpose, yet they now know that they have been, and still are, willing that God should do all his pleasure with them, and all his other rational and immortal creatures. But are there not some who are conscious that they always have been, and now are, unwilling that God should dispose of them according to his secret and eternal purpose? Can you, who are conscious of this, believe that you are friendly to God, and prepared to enjoy him, either in this life, or in the life to come? While you sit in judgment upon yourselves, must you not separate yourselves from God and from all his friends, and sentence yourselves to the doom of his incorrigible enemies? But if you will now only give up your disaffection to God, and rejoice in his character and government, and make his revealed will the rule of your duty, you may reverse the sentence you have passed upon yourselves, and gain a hope of eternal life which cannot be shaken or destroyed. Be entreated, then, to rejoice in the Lord always, and receive the consolation which will certainly flow from such a reconciliation to God.

SERMON XXII.

THE NATURAL AND MORAL POWER OF MEN IN RESPECT TO THE DIVINE DECREES.

PAUL said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. — ACTS, xxvii. 31.

THE history of Paul's voyage to Italy is one of the most affecting and instructive narratives in the word of God. It displays his power, wisdom, and goodness, in governing the winds and waves, and the hearts and hands of men, in the most trying and distressing circumstances. Paul set out in company with nearly three hundred persons, for a dangerous voyage, in a dangerous season of the year, and in direct opposition to his own opinion and advice. These ominous circumstances undoubtedly spread a gloom over the whole company, and made them leave the last sight of land with heavy hearts. Though the weather was in their favor at first, yet there soon arose a tempestuous wind, which obliged them to lighten the ship and commit themselves to the mercy of the waves. While they were in this situation, neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and the storm continued and increased until all hope of safety was lost. At length, Paul stood up and addressed to their desponding minds this pathetic and consoling language: "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve; saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail

with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This seasonable and solemn address had the desired effect, and proved the occasion of saving the lives of the whole company. For they complied with his advice, and took every precaution which their dangerous situation required. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." This is the connection of the words of the text; and in this connection they plainly imply, that those who sailed with Paul, had natural power to frustrate the decrees of God. For he had decreed that Paul should stand before Cæsar, and that those who were with him in the shipwreck should get safe to land. But yet, if the sailors had left the ship, as they once intended, they would have frustrated these divine purposes. For notwithstanding God had revealed these purposes to Paul, and he firmly believed they would be fulfilled, yet he expressly said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." These words, in this connection, plainly convey this general idea, that whatever God decrees shall take place by the instrumentality of men, they have natural power to prevent. If this point can be clearly illustrated and established, it will serve to throw light upon some important and interesting subjects. Accordingly, I shall endeavor to make it appear,

I. That God does decree that some things shall take place by the instrumentality of men.

II. That such things shall certainly take place. And yet,

III. That men have natural power to prevent their taking place.

I. It is too plain to be denied, that God does decree that some things shall take place by the instrumentality of men. We know that he determined to preserve Noah and his family in the general deluge; and he employed not only their agency, but the agency of many others, to effect his purpose. He predicted the preservation of Jacob and his family in a time of famine, and he employed Joseph to bring about the event. He

determined to lead the children of Israel from the house of bondage to the land of promise; and he employed Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, as the principal agents to accomplish his design. He decreed to overthrow the Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian empires in succession; and he carried into execution his purposes by the instrumentality of Cyrus, Alexander, and Augustus Cæsar. He determined that Christ should be crucified; and he brought about the great and important event by means of many wicked hearts and wicked hands. He determined that the gospel of Christ should be speedily spread; and he qualified and disposed Peter, and his fellow apostles, to propagate it through all Judea. He determined that it should have a wider spread; and he raised up Paul to preach the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen world. And in connection with this, he determined that he should be carried to Rome by means of a certain ship, and the instrumentality of certain sailors. These instances, and many more which the sacred writers have recorded, clearly prove that God does decree to bring about the common events of providence by the instrumentality of men. I proceed to show,

II. That whatever God has decreed to bring to pass by the instrumentality of men, shall certainly take place. There is no room to doubt whether that will take place which God has determined to bring to pass by his own hand. This is so plain, that those who deny the doctrine of divine decrees in general, profess to believe that God has decreed his own actions, and will most certainly act as he has determined to act. But many pretend to doubt whether every thing which God has decreed to be done by human agency will eventually come to pass. They suppose, therefore, there must be some uncertainty with respect to such events as God determines to bring to pass by human agency. But if God has decreed to bring about some events by human agency, it is absolutely certain that such agency will be exerted, and such events will exist. For the divine decree always fixes the certainty of whatever is decreed, by establishing an infallible connection between the means and the end. This is the difference between divine foreknowledge and decree. Foreknowledge does not make any future event certain, but only proves that it is certain; whereas a decree makes a future event certain, by constituting an infallible connection between the event decreed, and the cause or means of its coming to pass. When God decreed that Paul and his company should get safe to land, he fixed an infallible connection between their safety and the exertion of the sailors who managed the ship. And it was this infallible connection between the means and the end, which rendered this deliverance

absolutely certain before it took place. Paul believed what the angel of God told him, and entertained no doubt of arriving safe to land, while danger stared him in the face on every side. His faith was founded upon the divine decree, which formed an infallible connection between his safety and the means of securing it. And upon the ground of this infallible connection between the means and end, God represents the accomplishment of all his decrees as absolutely certain. "I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." David declares, "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." And Solomon asserts, "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." And again he says, "There are many devices in man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Men have often attempted to frustrate the divine decrees, but have never succeeded. Joseph's brethren endeavored to defeat the divine purposes, but all their efforts served to bring them to pass. Pharaoh attempted to defeat the divine designs, but was made the active instrument of carrying them into execution. Ahab vainly imagined that he could elude the divine decree, but met the arrow decreed to destroy him. No instance can be found of men's frustrating the decrees of God. Indeed, he challenges them to do this, if they can. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." And he said of his disobedient people who went into Egypt with a design to frustrate his prediction, they "shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs." It is absolutely certain that whatever God has decreed shall take place, whether with, or without human agency, shall infallibly come to pass; because in all cases his decree has established an inseparable connection between the means and the end. If men are the means decreed, they shall as certainly as any other means decreed, contribute to the end, and eventually bring it to pass. But yet,

III. Those events which God has decreed to bring about by the instrumentality of men, they have natural power to prevent. Though God had decreed and predicted that Paul should stand before Cæsar, and that all who sailed with him should arrive safe to land, yet these very men had natural power to prevent the fulfilment of the divine decree and prediction. If the centurion and soldiers had suffered the sailors to leave the ship, which they had natural power to do, it would have proved the destruction of the whole company. Or if the soldiers had killed all the prisoners, as they purposed, and as they might have

done, Paul would not have stood before Cæsar as God had decreed. And though it was decreed that the ship and lading should be lost in the storm, yet this damage might have been prevented, if the master and owner of the ship would have hearkened to Paul. So he expressly told them, when it was too late to rectify their error. Though God decreed that Noah should build the Ark and save his family, yet he had natural power to neglect that work, and so to frustrate that divine purpose. Though God decreed that Joseph should preserve his father's family in Egypt during the famine, yet he had natural power and opportunity to destroy, instead of preserving them, and so to prevent the event decreed and predicted. Though God decreed that Hazael should kill the king his master, yet he had natural power to refrain from that traitorous deed, and so to prevent the evil which God had determined and declared should exist. Though God decreed that Judas should betray Christ, yet he had natural power to refrain from that action, to which he was bribed by the Jews and tempted by Satan, and so to counteract the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In these instances, there can be no doubt but that those who fulfilled, had natural power to frustrate the divine purposes which depended upon their agency. And now to make it appear that this is true in all cases, I would observe,

1. That when God decrees that any event shall be brought about by the instrumentality of men, he always decrees that they shall have natural power to fulfil his decree. This must be extremely plain to every one; for we cannot suppose that God would decree that any event should be brought about by human agents incapable of bringing it about. But no man is capable of doing that which he has not natural power to do. When God decreed that Hazael should destroy his royal master, he decreed that Hazael should have both health and strength to perform the traitorous deed; for, had he been deprived of these, he could not have fulfilled the divine decree. This holds in all cases in which a decreed event depends upon the instrumentality of men. The decree of God is so far from taking away the natural power of those who are appointed to execute it, that it always secures that power. The decree which made it certain that Judas should betray Christ, made it equally certain that he should have natural power to perpetrate that crime; so that it was certain that he should neither take away his own life, nor have it taken away, before he had actually betrayed his Master. For God to decree that men should be instrumental in bringing some particular event to pass, and yet not decree to give them natural power to do what was necessary on their part to be done, would be the same as to decree that that event should not take

place. It must therefore be admitted that men always have natural power to do whatever God has decreed they shall do. But,

2. When men have natural power to do any thing, they always have natural power to neglect it. Nothing can be plainer than that those who have a natural power to act, have the same natural power to refrain from acting. The seamen and master of the ship, who had natural power to set sail, had the same natural power to desist from that rash conduct, according to the good advice of Paul. The soldiers, who had natural power to guard the prisoners, had the same natural power to neglect their duty, and let them escape. So that it always holds true, that when God gives men natural power to fulfil his decrees, they have the same natural power to neglect to fulfil them. Hence,

3. Men always have natural power to frustrate those divine decrees which they are appointed to fulfil. God decreed that Paul and his company should get safe to land by the instrumentality of the sailors; but they had natural power to frustrate that decree. So Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." The sailors were about to leave the ship, and to fail of affording the company that assistance which was decreed, and which was absolutely necessary to preserve the lives of the passengers. This they had natural power to neglect, and had they neglected it, they would have frustrated the divine decree. As it is always true that men have natural power to fulfil any decree which they are appointed to fulfil, so it is equally true that they always have the same natural power to prevent its fulfilment. Their not acting, in every such case, would as effectually frustrate the purpose of God, as their acting would fulfil his purpose. And since he always gives men natural power to fulfil his decrees, they always have the same natural power to defeat them. This all those are conscious of, who attempt to frustrate his designs. Joseph's brethren thought they had natural power to defeat the divine purpose. Ahab, when he went to Ramoth-Gilead, had the same opinion. The soldiers supposed they had natural power to kill Paul, as they proposed, to prevent his escape. And all men are conscious that they have natural power to neglect whatever they have natural power to do. It hence follows that men have, and know they have, natural power to frustrate those decrees of God whose accomplishment depends upon their agency.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since men always fulfil those decrees of God which they have natural power to frustrate, we must suppose that he always makes them willing to act agreeably to his decrees. Two things are absolutely necessary in order to men's acting; one is to be able, and the other is to be willing. By being able is meant a natural power to act; and by being willing a moral power to act. Whatever God determines men shall do, he not only gives them natural, but moral power to do; and when he gives them both a natural and moral power to do any thing, they are under a moral necessity of doing it. Hence there is always both a natural possibility, and a moral impossibility, of their defeating the divine purposes. In one sense it is always true that men can defeat the designs of God, and in another sense it is always equally true that they cannot defeat his designs. This distinction between natural and moral power, natural and moral necessity, and natural and moral impossibility, is agreeable to common sense, and to the whole tenor of scripture; and fully accounts for men's always fulfilling those purposes of God which they have natural power to frustrate. Though God knows that mankind have natural power to act contrary to his designs, yet he knows that he is able to make them willing to fulfil his purposes, and that he has determined to make them willing; and hence he knows that they always will fulfil his purposes, by voluntarily performing those actions which he has determined they shall perform. God has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them whithersoever he pleases, as the rivers of water are turned. And it is by operating upon their hearts that he makes them the voluntary instruments of fulfilling those purposes of his, which they have natural power to counteract and defeat.

2. If men always have natural power to frustrate as well as fulfil the decrees of God, then they always act freely in fulfilling his decrees. If they were willing as well as able to defeat his purposes, they certainly would defeat them. Was there ever an instance known of a man's being both able and willing to do an action, and neglecting to do it? Or can we even conceive of a man's being both able and willing to do an action, and yet neglecting to do it? It is just as impossible to conceive of such a case of neglect, as to conceive of an effect without a cause. When a man is both able and willing to act, there is a sufficient cause for his acting, but no cause at all for his neglecting to act. Hence it is absolutely certain that men always act freely, while they act agreeably to the divine purposes which they are able to frustrate, because no reason can

be given why they act agreeably to those divine purposes, but that they choose to act agreeably to them. If the decrees of God prevented men from acting voluntarily, they would indeed destroy their free agency; but since they are consistent with their acting voluntarily, they are entirely consistent with their moral freedom. Paul, and all those who sailed with him on their voyage to Italy, acted agreeably to the decrees of God; yet they acted freely, because they acted voluntarily, in every instance of their conduct. Accordingly, when they came to land, Paul told them that they ought to have hearkened to him, and that if they had hearkened to him, as they might have done notwithstanding the divine decree, they would have escaped the harm and loss which they had unhappily sustained. This instance demonstrates that the decrees of God respecting the conduct of men are perfectly consistent with their free agency in fulfilling his decrees.

3. If men have natural power to frustrate as well as to fulfil the decrees of God, then the non-elect have as fair an opportunity of being saved as the elect. The decree of reprobation leaves them in the full possession of all their natural power to choose or refuse the offers of mercy. They have as much strength, and as fair an opportunity, to embrace the gospel, as the elect have, before they embrace it. This may be clearly exemplified in the case of Judas, who was reprobated, and of Paul, who was elected. They were both for a long time in a state of impenitence and unbelief. Judas in that state was as able to embrace the gospel, as Paul was in the same state. Paul acted freely in rejecting the gospel, and as freely in embracing it; and Judas, if he had pleased, might have done the same. Though he refused the overtures of mercy, and betrayed his Master, yet after all, instead of destroying his own life, he might have repented and obtained forgiveness, notwithstanding the divine decree to the contrary. And this is true in regard to all the non-elect. God has provided an atonement for them as well as for the elect. He offers salvation to them as well as to the elect. He commands them to accept of salvation, as well as the elect. He promises salvation to them if they will accept it, as well as to the elect. Why then do they not enjoy as fair an opportunity to obtain eternal life as the elect? If they perish, they must necessarily perish by their own choice. God places all under the gospel in such a situation that the gospel must necessarily save them, if they only choose to be saved. The servant who received one talent was as able to improve it, and to obtain a reward from his master, as those who received and improved more talents. Those who were first invited to the gospel feast, and refused to go, were as

able to go as those were who went, and enjoyed the entertainment. The non-elect will for ever feel that they might have gone to heaven if they had chosen to go to that holy and happy place, and that their own choice, and not the decree of reprobation, shut them out of the kingdom of glory. And this will constrain them to justify God in freely offering salvation to them, and in condemning them for rejecting his gracious invitations.

4. If men have natural power to frustrate as well as to fulfil the decrees of God, then there is a propriety in the warnings, cautions and admonitions given to saints against falling away. Many imagine that such exhortations are inconsistent with the certainty of their final perseverance. We firmly believe that all those whom God has given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly be renewed, sanctified and saved. But if this be true, many are ready to ask, Why should real saints be cautioned against falling away, and threatened with final ruin if they should fall away? This subject furnishes a complete answer to this question. It is because they have natural power to frustrate the divine decrees. They have natural power to apostatize from the faith, as well as to persevere in it. There is, therefore, a natural possibility of their falling away; and this natural possibility of falling away creates danger; and where there is danger, cautions and warnings against it are altogether proper and necessary. Men may be in danger of an evil which it is certain they will eventually escape. It was after Paul had been divinely assured that he and his company should get safe to land, that he said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This implies that the certainty of their safety was consistent with the danger of their being lost. Paul was chosen from eternity to be a believer and a preacher of the gospel; but while he remained an enemy to Christ and to his followers, there was danger of his never becoming either a believer or preacher. And after he became a believer and a preacher, he tells us that he still considered himself in danger of being finally cast away. Believers live in the same world in which they lived before they believed; they are surrounded by the same spiritual enemies by which they were surrounded before they believed; and they have the same natural power to renounce the gospel, which they had to reject it before they believed. Hence they stand in peculiar need of cautions and warnings to resist the devil, to overcome the world, to keep themselves in the love of God, to watch and pray against temptation, and at all times and under all circumstances to take heed lest they fall. Such warnings and cautions are not only

proper but necessary means to keep saints from falling, and conduct them safely to the kingdom of heaven.

Finally. Since God has determined to bring about great and important events by the instrumentality of men, it is of great importance that they should be active and diligent in carrying into execution his wise and holy designs. The means to promote any end are as necessary as the end to be promoted. It was as necessary that the shipmen should be restrained from leaving the ship, as that the lives of all on board should be saved. By employing men as means in carrying on his designs, God has made human agency exceedingly necessary and important. He has put it into the power of men to do unspeakable good, while they are acting their parts in this probationary state. How eminently useful were the patriarchs, the prophets, and other good men, before Christ's day; and how much good have the apostles, the ministers, and the followers of Christ done since! The field of usefulness is continually opening wider and wider. God has let us know that he has determined to extend his kingdom through the world, by the instrumentality of human agents. A door is open for all men of every age, character and condition, to employ all their abilities to bring about the most important and desirable events. All who cordially coöperate with God in fulfilling his purposes, shall meet with final success and an ample reward. These are the strongest motives to exertion that can be presented to the minds of men. And in the view of these, let all be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

ELECTION.

For I have much people in this city. — Acts, xviii 10

After Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth, he preached several Sabbaths in a synagogue of the Jews; but "When they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." It was the Lord Jesus Christ who spake to Paul in this vision, and who said he had much people in this city, where there were yet but very few converts. He claimed many unconverted sinners in Corinth, whom he knew belonged to his people, and whom he intended should be converted by Paul's preaching. And this encouraged the apostle to continue there preaching the gospel, for the long space of a year and six months. This is the plain sense of the text, from which we may justly conclude,

That Christ knows who his people are before they are converted, or embrace the gospel. I shall show,

I. Who Christ's people are.

II. That he knows that his people will be converted, before they are converted. And,

III. What their state is before they are converted.

1. I am to show who Christ's people are. These are those whom his Father gave him in the covenant of redemption, as a reward for his mediatorial services and sufferings. God from eternity chose a certain number of mankind to eternal life. Hence says the apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." This elect number of our fallen race God engaged to give to his Son, as a reward for his obedience unto death on the cross. This was predicted by the prophet Isaiah, who says: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death — bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." The fulfilment of this promise Christ claimed the very night before his death. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." For these he prays in particular. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. — I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. — Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." All whom God has elected to eternal life, he has given to Christ, who claims them as his people. I now proceed to show,

II. That Christ knows that his people will be renewed and sanctified, even before they repent and believe the gospel. He was united with the Father before the foundation of the world in electing his people to eternal life, and therefore he knew who would be sanctified and saved, not only before any of them were made the subjects of special grace, but even before they existed. Accordingly, we find that he often declared that

he knew his people, and knew that they would be converted and sanctified before they were subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace. He told Paul in a vision that he had much people in Corinth, who had not then repented and embraced the gospel. He positively said, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Again he said to the impenitent Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." He knew that his Father, who gave him the elect for his people, had promised to make them willing to embrace the gospel. He had read this promise in the one hundred and tenth Psalm. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. — Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth." Those whom God predestinated to eternal life, he also predestinated to saving grace. "We know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Again the apostle says to christians, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." All Christ's people are elected to eternal life, and to regeneration and sanctification, as the necessary means to qualify them for it. This Christ knows, and therefore he knows all his people before as well as after they are renewed and sanctified.

It now remains to show,

III. What the state of those who are elected and given to Christ is before they are converted. Here I may say, in general, that their state is precisely the same as the state of those who are not elected, nor given to Christ. The scripture represents all mankind, in a state of nature, as sinful and guilty creatures. They have all sprung from the same original and corrupted stock. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for, that all

have sinned." The elect, by nature, are precisely in the same sinful and guilty state as the non-elect. Paul often tells his converts that they were no better than others before their conversion. He says to the Ephesians, "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;—and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In writing to the Corinthians, after describing the most vile and odious characters, he says, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And Paul acknowledges that he himself was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and the very chief of sinners, before his conversion. The scripture every where represents the elect before their conversion, as being in the same guilty and perishing state as the non-elect. But it may be still a serious and important question, what the state of those is who are elected to eternal life, and belong to the people of Christ, before they repent and believe the gospel. Here then I would observe in particular,

1. That they are in a state of total depravity. Being shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, they are transgressors from the womb. They are not only destitute of the love of God, but every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, only evil continually. In them, that is, in their flesh, there is no good thing. Their understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. "Unto the pure all things are pure," says the apostle; "but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Though the elect have the same powers of perception, reason and conscience before they are converted, that they have afterwards, yet the total corruption of their hearts has a blinding, corrupting, and perverting influence over all their intellectual faculties, and involves them in total moral darkness, with respect to spiritual and divine things. Though they have eyes, they see not; though they have ears, they hear not; and though they have reason, they understand not. They call evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. "Madness is in their hearts;" which makes them judge, and feel, and act, as though they were bereaved of their senses. "Their way is as darkness; they know not at

what they stumble." In this respect, their state exactly resembles the state of the non-elect.

2. The elect are by nature in a state of condemnation, and exposed to eternal death. Their moral depravity renders them objects of the divine displeasure. Being totally depraved, they are children of wrath. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity but with absolute abhorrence. All men in the state of nature carry about with them an evil heart, which is a transgression of the law of love, and for which the law of love condemns them to eternal destruction. "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." "The wages of sin is death;" and all sinners are under a sentence of eternal death. In this light Christ viewed them, when he came into the world to save them. He said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He said he came to seek and to save them that were lost. He said: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.—He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here Christ describes all mankind by nature as in a guilty, lost, perishing condition, under the wrath of God and a sentence of eternal condemnation. He represents this sentence of condemnation as lying upon all men before they repent and believe, but as being removed as soon as they embrace the gospel. Christ viewed all men in a state of nature, not only as condemned, but as deserving the everlasting punishment to which they are condemned. He said to them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Paul acknowledges that though he was one of the elect, yet before he was converted, he was justly condemned to eternal death. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy and just and good." The elect are as much the objects of the divine wrath before they are converted, as the non-elect; and if they should be cut down before they were converted, divine justice would shine as bright in their destruction,

as in the destruction of the non-elect. And it is owing to mere mercy, that the elect are not thus cut down and destroyed before they embrace the gospel.

3. All that the elect do, before they are converted, is altogether criminal and displeasing to God. They all possess a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. The elect are in the flesh, so long as they continue unconverted, and are under the entire dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and the source of nothing but disobedience. Whether they do, or do not conform externally to the divine law, they always internally break it. They live to themselves, and not unto God. They always act from mercenary motives, which the divine law condemns. They do, indeed, act very differently. Some live easy and secure, cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God; they break over all restraints, and indulge all the corruptions of their hearts. Some form habits of sobriety, decency, and industry, become useful members of civil society, and do a great deal of good in the world. Some read the word of God, regard the sabbath as holy time, attend public worship, and seek and strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And some cherish a hope that God is reconciled to them, and they are reconciled to him, and are walking in the strait and narrow path to eternal life. But notwithstanding this great diversity in the outward conduct and inward views and feelings of sinners, they are all essentially the same, enemies to God and to all righteousness. This is the representation which Christ gives of sinners in his sermon on the mount, in his parable of the Pharisee and the publican, in his parable of the prodigal and his brother, and in the account of the young man who professed so well, appeared so amiable, and went away sorrowful. The scripture represents the best services of the best sinners as altogether displeasing to God. And Paul acknowledged and condemned his best services, before his conversion, as extremely sinful and detestable. "If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Such was the character and conduct

of Paul, before his conversion, though he was a chosen vessel, and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world. Nor does it appear that he was then either externally or internally better than Judas, the son of perdition. Taking all the elect together, there is no ground to suppose that they are any better, before their conversion, than the non-elect. They do the same things that the non-elect do, and act from the same selfish and mercenary motives. They do nothing but sin, until their hearts are renewed.

4. While the elect continue in the state of nature, they as heartily hate and oppose the gospel, as the non-elect. They have the same evil heart of unbelief. They have the same moral blindness to the supreme glory of God, and to the divine beauty and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have the same hard thoughts of the precepts and penalty of the divine law. They have the same aversion to self-abasement and unconditional submission. And they have the same aversion to the holiness and happiness of heaven. This they feel and often express. They complain of God as a hard master, in requiring them to exercise that love which they have no heart to exercise, and in threatening them with a greater punishment than they deserve. They complain of God for choosing one and not another to eternal life, and for giving one and not another a new heart. They complain of God for disregarding their selfish desires, and rejecting their selfish prayers for future and eternal happiness. They dislike and oppose the whole plan of salvation as far as they understand it, and absolutely refuse to accept the terms of mercy proposed in the gospel. Hence Christ says to all sinners, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." This Christ saw verified from time to time. Though he spake as never man spake, and preached the gospel better than any other man ever preached it, yet sinners generally refused to embrace it. He severely reproved and condemned them for their unbelief. The Evangelist says, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes." And he denounced the same wo upon Capernaum, for the same rejection of the gospel. When the Jews saw the saving effects of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, they spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Upon which the apostles left them, and gave them up, as judging themselves unworthy of eternal life. We have the same account of the conduct of sin-

ners in Corinth. After they had heard Paul preach Christ, they opposed and blasphemed the gospel. And among these opposers were some of the elect, whom Christ claimed as his people, and whom he assured Paul that he should be instrumental in converting. These elect persons were as much opposed to the gospel before they were converted, as the non-elect. They stood out and resisted the terms of the gospel, until the very time that the enmity of their hearts was slain. And this is true of all the elect previously to their experiencing a saving change. So long as they continue in the state of nature, they are enemies to the cross of Christ, even as others. Paul himself was a striking instance. He certainly heard Stephen, if not Christ, preach the gospel, and opposed and rejected it. He says, he was "born out of due time." He rejected the gospel much longer than many others, and until Christ met him on his way to Damascus; when in a moment his heart was changed. Thus the elect always do before their conversion.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that they were not elected because they were better than others, but that they might be better. Almost every denomination of christians are willing to allow that such a doctrine as election is contained in the Bible; but many suppose that this doctrine means no more than that God chose some to happiness and not to holiness. They suppose that God chose some to be happy, because he foresaw that they would be holy. He elected them, they say, from a foresight of their good works, without determining whether more or less should be created anew unto good works. They suppose that God foresaw that some sinners would be disposed to love him, repent of their sins, and believe the gospel, while others would neglect, or refuse to perform these duties; and such better disposed persons he elected to eternal life. But it appears that there never were any such well disposed persons, while in the state of nature. They all come into the world in a state of total depravity, and continue in a state of enmity and entire disobedience to God, until they are the subjects of special grace. God could not, therefore, foresee that any of the fallen race of Adam would ever become reconciled to him, and cordially embrace the gospel, unless he had elected them to the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. If the description which has been given of the state of men by nature be true, then it is absolutely certain that God did not elect any to eternal life from a foresight of their good works. The truth is, God elected

them to holiness in this life, that they might be eternally happy in the next. This we are plainly taught in the Bible. Paul, who perfectly understood the doctrine of election and often preached it, repeatedly defines it, most intelligibly and correctly. He says to the Romans, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;" that is, he did predestinate to be conformed to the holy image of Christ. Speaking of the election of Jacob in distinction from Esau, he says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." This instance of national election he immediately makes use of to illustrate the doctrine of personal election to eternal life; but it would be no illustration of it, if the elect were chosen to salvation from a foresight of their good works. To the same purpose he says to the Thessalonians, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." The elect were chosen, not because they were by nature better than others, but that they might be better by grace. Accordingly they were chosen to grace, to qualify them for heaven. It is contrary to reason as well as scripture, to suppose that the elect were chosen to salvation from a foresight that they would be better than others, and naturally disposed to embrace the gospel; because on this supposition, there was no occasion of their being elected at all. Why should they be elected to salvation, when God knew that they would be saved if they were not elected? Though Arminians, Methodists, and semi-Calvinists, pretend to hold to the doctrine of election, yet they completely explain it away, by supposing that the elect are chosen to salvation from a foresight of their good works.

2. It appears from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that God had no more love of complacency towards the elect than towards the non-elect. He saw all mankind in a state of sin and misery, destitute of every holy and amiable quality, hateful and hating one another, and by nature children of wrath. He had no love of complacency towards either the elect or non-elect. It was a love of benevolence, therefore, and not a love of complacency, which moved him to provide a Saviour for this fallen world, and to elect some, and not others, to eternal life. So Christ told the world, when he was in it. He said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life." It was this pure love of benevolence towards all mankind, that moved him to choose any to salvation, and that moved him to choose a part, and not the whole of the human race, to eternal life. The love of benevolence is in its own nature impartial; because it equally extends to the evil as well as to the good. It has no respect to any moral excellence in the object of it. God's love of benevolence extends to the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, as well as to mankind; and it extends to the worst, as well as to the best of the human race. As God was therefore moved to choose some and not all, and one and not another, to eternal life by pure benevolence, it was impossible that he should choose the elect from partiality towards the elect. He could see nothing more amiable in the elect than in the non-elect; and consequently he could not exercise any love of complacency towards the elect more than towards the non-elect. Those who object against the doctrine of election as implying partiality towards the elect, would see at once that there is no foundation for this objection, if they would only see the distinction between the love of benevolence and the love of complacency. If the elect are in such a state before conversion as has been represented, then God could not, while viewing them as totally depraved, choose them to life rather than others in the same state, from any partial regard to them. As God did not choose the elect from a foresight of any of their amiable qualities or good works, so he could not exercise any partiality towards them in electing them to salvation. Let it be remembered then, that God's electing love was the love of benevolence, and not the love of complacency. Hence the doctrine of election is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of God's universal benevolence; from which so many argue the doctrine of universal salvation, without the least color of reason.

3. It appears from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that they have no more evidence that they ever shall be converted, than the non-elect have that they shall be converted. The non-elect have no evidence that they shall ever experience a saving change; and the elect by nature are precisely in the same condition. They are dead in trespasses and sins. They do nothing that is acceptable to God, but constantly displease him, even by their selfish desires and prayers to be saved. If they are secure, they have no evidence that they shall be awakened. If they are awakened, they have no evidence that they shall ever have genuine convictions. And if they have genuine convictions, they have no evidence that their hearts will be changed; and they generally give up all hope that they ever shall be reconciled to God, to Christ and to the

gospel, which they sensibly hate. As they continually grow more and more sinful, and more and more displeasing to God, so long as they continue in their totally corrupt state, just like the non-elect, so they have no more evidence of ever being saved than the non-elect. I know that they are often encouraged to expect saving grace before it is granted. But they are encouraged upon a false supposition. It is supposed that they are growing better, or may grow better, by doing things more pleasing to God, while their hearts are far from him. This would not be supposed if the true state of sinners before conversion were rightly understood. As soon as the elect become acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and find themselves in a state of condemnation, and realize the wrath of God abiding upon them, they do not see, and cannot easily be made to believe, that they have any more evidence of being renewed, sanctified and saved, than any other persons in the world. They are apt to think that they are not elected.

4. It appears from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that they are in as much danger of not being converted, as they are of not being saved after they are converted. Some deny that there is any certainty that those who are converted will finally be saved. And they deny this because the scripture represents saints as being in danger of falling away. And it is true that the scripture does represent saints as exposed to the allurements of the world, the errors of deceivers, and the subtile devices of the great adversary, which renders their state dangerous. But they are in no more danger after they are converted, than they were in of not being converted. They were then exposed to the undue love of the world, to the delusions of errorists, to a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. In a word, they were exposed to all the dangers to which the non-elect were exposed. How dangerous was the state of Paul until the very day he was converted! How little reason had the apostles and primitive christians to expect that Saul of Tarsus, who rejected and blasphemed the gospel, and breathed out threatenings and slaughter against all who embraced it, would ever become converted to the gospel which he so much hated and opposed, or cordially embrace the crucified Saviour whom he despised and rejected as a vile imposter! He certainly was in as great danger of never embracing the gospel, before he embraced it, as he was in of not enduring to the end, and of becoming a castaway. And this is true of all the elect, before they are converted. The truth is, that the elect are in danger of not being converted, and of not being saved after they are converted. But this is no evidence that any of the elect will fail of being converted, or fail of being saved after

they are converted. For they are the people of Christ, both before and after they are converted. And the promise of God to Christ in the covenant of redemption absolutely secures both their conversion and salvation. The awakening, conviction, conversion, and final salvation of the elect, stand upon the immutable ground of the covenant of redemption, which can no more fail than the faithfulness of God can fail; and that can no more fail than God can cease to exist.

5. It appears from the state of the elect before conversion, that their election gives them no more power to embrace the gospel than the non-elect have. The non-elect have all the natural power they need, in order to embrace the gospel. They have a capacity to understand the gospel when they read or hear it, and to feel their obligations to embrace it, but have no heart or disposition to embrace it. They want nothing but moral power, or a disposition to embrace it. Their not being elected, or if you will, their being reprobated, affords no obstacle in the way of their embracing it. On the other hand, the elect before conversion have natural power to embrace the gospel, but have no more heart or disposition to embrace it than the non-elect. Their being elected gives them no natural or moral power to embrace it. The elect before conversion are under precisely the same moral inability to repent and believe the gospel that the non-elect are. The elect before conversion, as well as the non-elect, often plead that they cannot embrace the gospel, because they do not know that they are elected. But there is no truth nor weight in this excuse, in respect to either. Their not knowing whether they are elected or not, is no reason or cause why they are not willing to embrace the gospel. The real cause is, that they are so totally depraved that they would not be willing to embrace it, if they knew that they were elected to eternal life.

6. It appears, from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that no sinner has ground to despair of salvation. When unrenewed sinners realize their true state and character, they are not unfrequently driven to the borders of despair. They appear too sinful and too obstinate to themselves, to hope for mercy. But they cannot know but they are elected and shall certainly be saved. What if they appear to themselves as vile as reprobates? The elect are often as vile as the non-elect before conversion. Some of Christ's people in Corinth were as vile as reprobates, before they were converted. The apostle, having described these vile, and guilty, and odious characters, expressly tells them, "and such were some of you." And Paul says that he was, before his conversion, one of the chief of sinners, though a chosen vessel; and that he was converted after

a long course of impenitence, and unbelief, and persecution as an example to prevent any sinners from despairing of being finally converted and saved. It is the character of the elect to live in sin until they are converted, whether they are converted in an earlier or later stage of life. There is no room for sinners to despair of salvation previous to their last breath. It is their duty to believe and be saved.

7. It appears from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that there is the same propriety in God's offering salvation to the non-elect as to the elect. This many suppose to be entirely inconsistent. Some deny the doctrine of election, because they find the offers of mercy made to all in the gospel. And some who maintain the doctrine of election suppose it is inconsistent with offering salvation to the non-elect. But where does this inconsistency lie? God has provided a Saviour for the non-elect. Christ died as much for Judas as for Paul. The non-elect are no worse by nature or practice than the elect, before conversion. They have the same natural capacity to read, to hear, to understand, and to embrace the gospel, that the elect have before conversion. Why, then, should not God offer salvation to all, though he has chosen some, and not others, to eternal life? God is willing to accept the non-elect as well as the elect, if they will comply with the terms of salvation. This he declares under the solemnity of an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" The invitations of the gospel are all unlimited and universal, and apply to the non-elect, as well as to the elect. And this is perfectly proper, because election does not enable any one to embrace the gospel, and reprobation does not disenable any one to embrace it. The non-elect are under the same indispensable obligations to repent and believe the gospel, that the elect are before conversion, and they deserve to perish for rejecting the counsel of God against themselves.

8. It appears, from the state and character of the elect before conversion, that there is but one way in which any can know that they are elected; and that is, by passing from death unto life, by turning from sin to holiness, by exercising holy love, repentance, faith, and every other gracious affection. To these christian graces the elect are chosen, as well as to salvation. And it is by these fruits of the Spirit that Christ knows his people, and they know that they are his. "If children, then heirs," says the apostle; and "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The elect must come out of the state of nature into the state of the grace, before they can

know that they are elected. Grace is the only certain evidence of grace; and, therefore, the apostle exhorts christians to live in the exercise of grace in order to gain assurance that they are chosen to salvation. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." "Wherefore give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." This is the only way in which any can know that they are elected; and they ought not to desire any other way to make their calling and election sure. If they could know their election in any other way, it would do them hurt rather than good. Let them grow in grace, and they will grow in assurance of their calling and election to eternal life.

9. If all Christ's people are elected, and God knows them as well before as after they are converted, then it is absolutely certain that they will all finally be saved, notwithstanding all the discouraging and unfavorable appearances against it. Though there are only a few of his people who are conformed to his image, and the great mass of mankind are opposed to his little flock, and conspiring to destroy it, yet all that his Father has given him shall come to him. All such that are yet in their sins in this place, in this land, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, shall be renewed, sanctified, and saved. Millions, who are yet to be born in sin, shall be brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Christ shall reign till his kingdom shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, and till all his enemies shall be made his footstool. The Father has promised that his people shall be willing in the day of his power, and his promise cannot fail. The few friends Christ now has in the world, may look forward by an eye of faith, and joyfully anticipate the day when multitudes which no man can number, shall rise from spiritual death to spiritual life, and reign in righteousness from the rising to the setting sun, and there shall be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. This is a most animating motive to pray to the Father, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

SERMON XXIV.

REPROBATION.

And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up. — Exodus, ix. 16.

The history of Pharaoh is extremely interesting to all descriptions of men. It always awakens their feelings, and constrains them to take one side or the other, in the controversy between him and his Maker. Though few will presume to justify the character and conduct of Pharaoh, yet many are bold enough to censure the character and conduct of Jehovah. It is therefore a very solemn and important subject, which the words I have read suggest to our serious consideration. God tells Pharaoh to his face, "I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up." This declaration plainly imports that God raised up Pharaoh to fit him for destruction. To vindicate this instance of the divine conduct will be the business of the ensuing discourse. And in order to this, it may be proper to show,

I. That God did destroy Pharaoh.

II. That he raised him up to fit him for destruction. And,

III. That he is to be justified in this instance of his conduct.

I. I am to show that God did destroy Pharaoh. The Deity threatened to cut him off from the earth, which plainly implied something more than barely putting an end to his life. Had he permitted him to die by old age, or by sickness, or even by what is commonly called accident, we should have had no right to conclude from the manner of his dying that he was really destroyed. But there were two circumstances attending

his death, which may be justly considered as denoting his destruction. He was cut off in the midst of his wickedness. Though he had been visited with plague after plague, yet he persisted in hardening his heart against God; and though he had permitted the Israelites to leave his kingdom, yet he pursued them with a strong desire and expectation of making them feel the weight of his vengeance. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;—I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." This was the language of Pharaoh's heart. He breathed nothing but malice and revenge; and he was cut off in the full exercise of these malignant passions. This is one circumstance which indicates that his death was his destruction. And another is, that he died by the immediate hand of divine justice. As God opened the Red Sea in mercy to Israel, so he shut it again in judgment to Pharaoh, whom he had threatened to destroy. This was cutting him off by a judicial act, and in the same manner in which he had destroyed other incorrigible enemies. He drowned the inhabitants of the old world by a flood. He consumed the men of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven. Those sinners, we know, were victims of divine wrath, and set forth as examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And since Pharaoh died as they died, we may conclude that he perished as they perished. God raised him up not merely for death, but for destruction. And it is not the first, but the second death, which may be properly called the destruction of a rational and immortal creature. This warrants us to believe that when God cut off Pharaoh from the earth, he consigned him to the regions of darkness, where he is reserved unto the judgment and condemnation of the great day.

II. I am to show that God raised up Pharaoh to fit him for destruction. God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. He never does any thing without a previous design. If he destroyed Pharaoh in the manner which has been represented, there can be no doubt but that he previously intended to destroy him in such a manner. But the divine declarations supersede the necessity of reasoning upon this head. God made known, from time to time, his purpose of destroying Pharaoh. He told Pharaoh to his face, that he would cut him off from the earth, and that he had raised him up for this purpose. He said to Moses before he went to Pharaoh, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go;" and added, "I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt." This was a plain prediction of the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. And with equal plainness he revealed his purpose of destroying Pharaoh, to his friend Abraham. "Thy seed shall be a

stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years: And that nation whom they shall serve, *will I judge;*" that is, destroy. It appears from this last prediction, that God had formed his purpose concerning Pharaoh, ages before he brought him into being; and hence we may naturally conclude that he formed it from eternity. He then formed all his other purposes; and there is no reason to imagine that he determined the character and condition of the king of Egypt in a later period.

Now if we look into the history of God's conduct towards Pharaoh, we shall find that he used all the proper and necessary means to form him a vessel of wrath, and fit him for that miserable end to which he was appointed.

1. He raised him up from nothing into being. He gave him a rational and immortal existence. He endued him with all the intellectual faculties which were necessary to constitute him a free, moral agent. Pharaoh appears to have possessed a strong and capacious mind. He was certainly capable of enlarged views. He had an extensive reach in his politics. His designs and measures with respect to the children of Israel were deep, and well adapted to answer the purposes of his own personal power and interest. This shows that the Father of spirits gave him superior abilities, and placed him high in mental eminence.

2. God raised him up to the throne of Egypt. He girded him, and carried him in the arms of his providence, through infancy, childhood and youth, up to riper years. He gave him opportunities for cultivating his natural powers, and for qualifying himself for the highest station in life. At length, he placed the crown upon his head, and put the reins of government into his hands. He now stood at the head of a nation which held the first rank among the nations of the earth, in respect to power, wealth, learning and all the refinements of polished life. In this splendid situation, he was surrounded with every thing that could please his taste, flatter his vanity, and inflame his ambition. He knew no man in the world, who was able to control either his power or his pursuits. To such a giddy height God was pleased to raise him in the course of his providence. And this was a natural and necessary step to prepare him for his final fate. For it is a divine maxim, that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

3. God not only raised Pharaoh to the pinnacle of human glory, but also removed from him outward restraints. Barely giving him the power of an unlimited monarch, was virtually setting him above all legal influence and control. But besides

this, God removed Moses from his presence and kingdom, who was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and thoroughly acquainted with all the arts and intrigues of a court. Had this wise and pious man been permitted to stand near the throne, or even to live in the kingdom, his example and influence might have been a silent and powerful check upon the ambition and cruelty of a lawless tyrant. But it seems God sent him into Midian, on purpose to give Pharaoh ample opportunity of indulging his inhuman and malignant disposition, in oppressing and abusing his innocent subjects. Accordingly we find that it was in the absence of Moses, that he devised and passed those cruel edicts which were designed to break the spirits and destroy the lives of the unoffending Israelites. God meant, by taking off outward restraints, to give him a fair opportunity of filling up the measure of his sins, and of ripening himself for deserved and predestinated ruin.

4. God endured this vessel of wrath with much long suffering and forbearance. Instead of treating him according to his deserts, he waited long to be gracious. He used a variety of means to bring him to repentance. He sent him one solemn message after another, by the mouth of Moses and of Aaron. And to impress those messages the more deeply on his mind, he followed them with one awful judgment after another, until he had spread desolation, terror and mourning through the land. These dreadful scenes were too heavy for Pharaoh to bear, and constrained him time after time to stoop and beg for relief. His cries were heard, and respite was granted. But mercies, as well as judgments, conspired to increase his stupidity and hardness of heart, which prepared him for a more unexpected and more aggravated doom.

But how came Pharaoh to wax worse and worse under both the smiles and frowns of Heaven? Mercies and afflictions have a moral tendency to soften and meliorate the hearts of good men. Saints have often derived great benefit from the instructions and discipline of divine providence. And even obdurate sinners, such as Manasseh, have been brought to humility and repentance under divine corrections. How then did it come to pass that Pharaoh grew more and more stupid and incorrigible under all the frowns, as well as patience and long suffering of God? This pertinent question leads to another important observation.

5. That God hardened his heart. We read, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." And we read again, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Pharaoh, as a man and as a king, was

just as much dependent on God as other men and other kings. His heart, therefore, was in the hand of the Lord, who had a right as well as power to turn it whithersoever he pleased. And he was pleased to turn it against all good. God told Moses before he sent him to Pharaoh, that he *would* harden his heart; and he repeatedly told Moses after he had sent him to Pharaoh, that he *had* hardened his heart. God intended to hinder Pharaoh from granting the request of the children of Israel, until he had prepared him for his final overthrow. And he foresaw that nothing short of hardening his heart would fit him for that fatal event. For the powers and faculties which he had given him, the exalted dignity which he had conferred upon him, and all the peculiar circumstances under which he had placed him, would have mutually conspired to fit him for heaven, if his heart had been tender and benevolent. It is often thought and said that nothing more was necessary on God's part, in order to fit Pharaoh for destruction, than barely to leave him to himself. But God knew that no external means and motives would be sufficient of themselves to form his moral character. He determined, therefore, to operate on his heart itself, and cause him to put forth certain evil exercises in the view of certain external motives. When Moses called upon him to let the people go, God stood by him and moved him to refuse. When Moses interceded for him and procured him respite, God stood by him and moved him to exult in his obstinacy. When the people departed from his kingdom, God stood by him and moved him to pursue after them with increased malice and revenge. And what God did on such particular occasions, he did at all times. He continually hardened his heart, and governed all the exercises of his mind, from the day of his birth to the day of his death. This was absolutely necessary to prepare him for his final state. All other methods, without this, would have failed of fitting him for destruction.

It is now time to make it appear, if possible,

III. That God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh.

We must proceed upon the supposition that God did treat him in the manner which has been represented; and especially that he did, among other things, actually harden his heart. For, if this be not supposed, there is no occasion to say a single word to justify the divine conduct, nor so much as to inquire why it is to be justified. But supposing this to have been sufficiently proved, it may be observed,

1. That better judges than we can pretend to be, have approved of God's treatment of Pharaoh. We find his own testimony in favor of God and against himself. In the verse

before the text God told him that he would cut him off from the earth. And in the text he told him that in very deed he had raised him up for this purpose. But we read afterwards in the twenty-seventh verse of the context, "Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." This Pharaoh said after God had raised him up, after he had taken off restraints from his mind, after he had sent severe judgments upon him, after he had hardened his heart, and after he had told him that he had raised him up to destroy him. By this time Pharaoh was nearly ripened for ruin, and properly prepared to judge whether God had injured *him*, or whether he had injured *God*. And he freely acknowledges that he was wicked, and had injured God, and that God was righteous, and had never injured him. This testimony has every mark of truth and sincerity. And who shall presume to impeach the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, after he himself has publicly and solemnly justified it?

Moses and Aaron were well acquainted with the whole series of God's conduct towards Pharaoh, in the most critical and important stage of his life. God told them his ultimate design with respect to the king of Egypt. They also carried his messages to Pharaoh, and brought back his answers to God. They were personally knowing to the mercies and judgments which God employed to bring Pharaoh to submission and repentance, and also to the language and conduct of Pharaoh, under the divine warnings, admonitions and corrections. They stood spectators of the last miracle of justice, by which God fulfilled his threatening to Pharaoh, and cut him off from the earth. And they were so fully persuaded of the benevolence as well as rectitude of the divine conduct, that they most cordially joined with near three millions of people, in praising God for the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts in the merciless waves. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. — Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee; thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" After such a solemn, public and joyful approbation of God's treatment of Pharaoh, it must be presumption in us to call in question the justice or the goodness of God.

But still better judges than the leaders, elders and tribes of Israel have approved and applauded the divine conduct towards the hardened and incorrigible king of Egypt; I mean the saints and angels in heaven. They have sung, and will continue to sing the song of Moses at the overthrow of Pharaoh. The apostle John tells us that he saw not only the seven angels who had the seven last plagues, but also them that had gotten the victory over the beast, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses the servant of God, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints!" There is not a single instance of God's conduct since the creation of the world, which has been more universally and constantly applauded by the best judges of moral beauty and rectitude, than his raising up and destroying the cruel and incorrigible king of Egypt. We must believe, therefore, that the Judge of all the earth did right, in forming and destroying that vessel of wrath.

2. The sovereignty and justice of God allowed him to treat Pharaoh in the manner which has just been described. The Deity had a sovereign right to bring Pharaoh into existence, to give him the powers and faculties of a moral agent, to place him at the head of a kingdom, and to operate upon his heart in the same manner in which he operates upon the hearts of other men. And when Pharaoh, under such circumstances, became extremely haughty, cruel, malevolent and obstinate, he had a right, in point of justice, to cut him off from the earth, and send him to endless perdition. In forming Pharaoh, God displayed neither justice nor injustice, but only sovereignty. As the potter is a sovereign in forming his vessels, so God is a sovereign in forming moral agents. And after he has formed moral agents, he has a right to treat them according to their moral characters. If their moral characters are perfectly holy, God has a right to make them completely and for ever happy; but if their moral characters are perfectly sinful, God has a right to make them completely and for ever miserable. God formed Pharaoh a moral agent, and, as a moral agent, he was totally wicked, and deserved to be cast off for ever. God therefore acted according to strict justice in dooming him to eternal destruction. Divine sovereignty was displayed in the formation, and divine justice in the destruction, of Pharaoh; and for the display of these perfections towards that son of perdition, God deserves the approbation and praise of all his intelligent creatures.

I have now finished what I proposed to say concerning God's treatment of Pharaoh. If what has been said be true,

it will establish some points of serious importance upon a firmer foundation than that of mere metaphysical arguments.

1. It appears from the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, that the doctrine of reprobation is true in fact. Pharaoh was a reprobate. God determined from eternity to make him finally miserable. This determination he eventually carried into effect. He brought him into being, formed him a rational and accountable creature, tried him with mercies and judgments, hardened his heart under both, caused him to fill up the measure of his iniquity, and finally cut him off by an act of his justice. This is all that has ever been understood by reprobation, as the counterpart to the doctrine of election. And all this God did with respect to Pharaoh, who therefore has every mark of a reprobate. But if God did actually reprobate Pharaoh, we may justly conclude that he reprobated all others whom he did not choose to eternal life. This inference the apostle Paul draws from the fate of Pharaoh, in the ninth of Romans. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The case of Pharaoh is here introduced to prove and illustrate the doctrine of reprobation, as the counterpart to the doctrine of election. Pharaoh's fate proves that God has in fact reprobated some of the human race. And God's conduct towards him illustrates his conduct towards all the vessels of wrath, who shall be fitted for destruction, in distinction from his conduct towards all the vessels of mercy, who shall be fitted for salvation. This same apostle teaches, in various other passages in his writings, that God has reprobated all whom he has not elected. He says to the Thessalonians, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Here he supposes that all whom God has not appointed to salvation, he has appointed to wrath. Again he says to the Romans, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath ob-

tained it, and the rest were blinded. According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day. And David saith, let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." His meaning is, let every thing serve to blind and harden reprobate sinners, and fit them for final destruction. The apostle Peter represents the doctrine of reprobation in direct contrast with the doctrine of election. He says to christians in general, "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." Our Saviour, likewise, in the course of his preaching, taught the doctrine of reprobation in plain and pointed terms. He publicly called Judas before his death, "the son of perdition." He told some of his obstinate hearers, that he came into the world to save the elect, and to destroy the non-elect. "Jesus said, for judgment I am come into the world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." And it appears that his miracles and preaching had this effect upon those who were given up to a reprobate spirit. "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Scripture facts and declarations give us no more room to doubt whether God has reprobated some, than whether he has elected others; nor whether he will eventually destroy all the reprobate, than whether he will eventually save all the elect. Though multitudes may dislike the doctrine of reprobation, yet none have a right to say that this solemn and important doctrine is not plainly revealed in the scriptures of truth.

2. This instance of Pharaoh removes all the objections which ever have been, or which ever can be, made against the doctrine of reprobation. Many have exerted the whole force of their minds to devise plausible objections against this unpalatable

doctrine. But all that has been or can be said against it, stands refuted by the fate of Pharaoh; he was a reprobate.

It is said, if God has reprobated a certain number of mankind, then he can have no other end in bringing those persons into existence than merely to destroy them; which is totally inconsistent with true benevolence.

Though God always intended to destroy Pharaoh, yet he had a wise and benevolent design in giving him existence. He meant that he should act an important part on the stage of life, and be greatly instrumental in promoting the benevolent designs of providence. This God told him before he destroyed him. "For now will I stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and *thou shalt be cut off from the earth.* And in very deed *for this cause* have I raised thee up, *for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*" God made Pharaoh for himself, as well as for the day of evil. And he would not have made him for the day of evil, had it not been necessary in order to declare his own glory. God has the same end to answer, by bringing all the non-elect into existence. He intends they shall be the means of displaying his own glory, both in time and eternity. And what if God, willing to show his wrath and make his power known in the vessels of wrath, bring them into existence for this noble and important purpose? Who may or ought to object? The glory of God is the highest and best end he could propose in the creation of the world. And if he originally intended, and will finally make the non-elect to be subservient to this end, his benevolence will as clearly appear in reprobating some to eternal perdition, as in electing others to eternal life.

It is said, the doctrine of reprobation is inconsistent with free agency, because it implies that God has decreed all the actions of those whom he has appointed to destruction; which lays them under a fatal necessity of pursuing the path to ruin.

This objection is contrary to fact. Pharaoh was a reprobate. His actions were decreed and predicted. God foredetermined and foretold how he should act; and he did act according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. But it appears from the whole history of his life, that he acted as freely and voluntarily as any other man in the world. Did he not act freely in commanding the midwives to destroy every male among the Hebrew children? Did he not act freely in refusing to obey the messages of heaven by the mouth of Moses? Did he not act freely in appointing task-masters to increase the burdens and distresses of the children of Israel? Did he not act freely in confessing his faults to Moses, and in

begging him to intercede for him at the throne of divine grace? Did he not act freely in forbidding Moses to see his face any more? Did he not act freely afterwards, in not only permitting but urging the Israelites to leave his kingdom? And after they had left it, did he not act freely in pursuing them into the Red Sea, where he finished his course and met his fate? It is impossible to conceive that Pharaoh should have enjoyed more liberty or moral freedom than he actually did enjoy, while performing those very actions which were the appointed means of his destruction. He acted freely and voluntarily all his life, under a divine decree, and under a divine influence. Though *God* hardened his heart, yet *he* hardened his own heart, and freely walked in the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. Here, then, it appears to be true in fact, that the doctrine of reprobation is perfectly consistent with free agency. The case of Pharaoh is exactly similar to the case of all other reprobates. And if the decree of reprobation did not destroy his moral freedom, it cannot destroy the moral freedom of any one of the non-elect.

It is said, the doctrine of reprobation is inconsistent with the use of means. If God has decreed that any should finally perish, it is vain and absurd to use any means in order to their salvation.

This objection is founded upon the preceding, and if there is no foundation for that, there is none for this. If the decree of reprobation does not destroy free agency, then it does not destroy the use of means. If reprobates remain free agents, then there is a great propriety in treating them as such, and in exhibiting before them all the motives of the gospel, to lead them to repentance. But it is sufficient to say, that God used means with Pharaoh, to bring him to good, though he had determined to destroy him. He admonished him of his duty and of his danger; he visited him with mercies and judgments; he employed Moses and Aaron, and even his own subjects, to persuade him to submission; and he delayed to cut him off from the earth, until it clearly appeared that all means and motives served to harden his heart and increase his obstinacy. This instance of the divine conduct towards a reprobate, demonstrates the propriety of using all the means of grace with reprobates. God addressed the understanding, the conscience, and the heart of Pharaoh, and used every method proper to be used, to bring any obstinate sinner to repentance. Reprobates are as capable of feeling the force of moral motives as any other men in the world; and therefore it is as proper to use the means of grace with the non-elect, as with the elect. So God teaches, by his word and by his conduct.

It is said the doctrine of reprobation carries the idea of partiality, which is a reproach to the divine character.

This objection is contrary to plain fact. God did reprobate Pharaoh; and in doing it, he displayed his sovereignty, not his partiality. God has a right to treat his creatures differently, when he sees it will answer a wise and benevolent purpose. And he told Pharaoh that he had such a good design in decreeing his destruction. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." But if God had a wise and benevolent purpose in reprobating Pharaoh, then he must have had the same noble and important end in reprobating all the non-elect. And this excludes every idea of partiality from the doctrine of reprobation. For partiality consists, not merely in treating one person differently from another, but in treating one person differently from another *without any reason.*

I might go on stating and answering objections against the doctrine of reprobation, but I forbear. The single instance of Pharaoh will apply to, and completely answer, every objection which can be made against God's choosing some to eternal life, and reprobating others to everlasting perdition. Pharaoh himself once and again justified God and condemned himself. And all reprobates will sooner or later be obliged to adopt his sentiments and speak his language. A strong and irresistible conviction of their own guilt, and of the divine rectitude in foreordaining their existence, their character and their condition, will give a peculiar emphasis to that last sentence, which will fix them in everlasting darkness and despair.

3. If God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh, whom he predestinated to eternal destruction, then it argues much more modesty to maintain the doctrine of reprobation, than to deny it. It is very often thought and said that it betrays arrogance and presumption in ignorant and short sighted creatures, to pry into the divine counsels, and teach the doctrine of divine decrees, especially the most obnoxious and mysterious part of it, that of reprobation. But how does it appear to be any more prying into the divine counsels, to assert than to deny this doctrine? And how does it appear any more arrogant and presumptuous to assert, than to deny any thing respecting the Deity. The truth is, arrogance consists in denying what God has asserted; but modesty in believing and maintaining it. And upon this principle, it argues real modesty to believe and maintain the doctrine of reprobation, which God has plainly revealed in his word. It is subjecting our wisdom to his wisdom, and our partial feelings to his infinite

benevolence. But it is hard to conceive how there can be the least degree of modesty in denying what God has asserted, and in being wise above what he has written. This is real arrogance and presumption, in whomsoever it is found.

4. If it be true that God is to be justified in foreordaining the destruction of the non-elect, then it is altogether proper and necessary to preach the doctrine of reprobation. It seems to be a prevailing opinion among many who acknowledge that the doctrine of reprobation is contained in the Bible, that it is unnecessary and improper for public teachers to insist upon it in their public discourses. They say that this doctrine is dark and mysterious; that it is discouraging to sinners; that it tends to lead them into despair; that it is apt to give them false and disagreeable ideas of the divine character. For these reasons, they think it is a more wise and prudent practice in preachers, either never to mention the doctrine of reprobation, or if they mention it, not to dwell upon it, or attempt to inculcate it as an article of faith. But is this christian prudence? Is this declaring all the counsel of God? Is this speaking on God's behalf? Is this giving sinners an opportunity of knowing whether they love or hate their Creator? There is no divine truth which is more directly suited to discover the hearts of sinners to themselves, than the doctrine of reprobation. It never fails to awaken their native enmity to the divine character. God may visit them with mercies, or with judgments, and they may still remain ignorant of their hearts. Ministers may preach the terrors of the law, and the gracious invitations of the gospel, and they still remain unacquainted with their real character and condition. But when the doctrine of reprobation is clearly exhibited before them, they cannot help discovering the plague of their own hearts. They cannot endure the thought that God has determined their character and condition for eternity, and will according to his eternal purpose either soften or harden their hearts, and either fit them for heaven or for hell. They cannot bear to be treated as God treated Pharaoh, and Judas, and others, who were predestinated to eternal destruction. If it be a matter of importance, therefore, that sinners should be made acquainted with the character of God, and with their own character, then it is a matter of equal importance that the doctrine of reprobation should be clearly and fully exhibited. This doctrine cannot be preached too plainly. It ought to be represented as God's eternal and effectual purpose to destroy the non-elect. God could not reprobate any from eternity without intending to carry his eternal purpose into execution. Such is the nature and extent of the doctrine of reprobation; which displays the feelings of God's heart towards

that portion of mankind who will be finally lost. And these feelings are his true glory, which he means shall be fully displayed. To use his own expression, "God is not ashamed" of the doctrine of reprobation. He means to have it known that he raised up one and another of our fallen race for final destruction, that his name may be declared throughout all the earth. And shall his servants, who are set apart to delineate his character, and explain his word, be ashamed to teach a doctrine which is designed to give the most bright and affecting display of his glory?

5. If God is to be justified in his treatment of Pharaoh and of all the rest of the non-elect, then it is absolutely necessary to approve of the doctrine of reprobation in order to be saved. None can be admitted to heaven who are not prepared to join in the employments as well as enjoyments of the heavenly world. And we know that one part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, which is an anthem of praise for the destruction of Pharaoh and his reprobate host. How then can any be meet for an inheritance among the saints in light, who are not reconciled to the doctrine of reprobation, which is, and which will be for ever, celebrated there?

While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torments will be eternally ascending in the view of the vessels of mercy, who instead of taking the part of those miserable objects, will say, "Amen, Alleluia, praise ye the Lord." It concerns, therefore, all the expectants of heaven to anticipate this trying scene, and ask their hearts whether they are on the Lord's side, and can praise him for reprobating as well as electing love. This is the most proper subject by which to try their christian character. They must sooner or later be brought to this touchstone, and either stand or fall by it. The day of decision is at hand. The scenes of eternity will soon open to view. And those who cannot heartily and joyfully sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, must be excluded from the abodes of the blessed, and sink speechless into the bottomless pit of despair.

PART VII.

DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY.

SERMONS XXV.— XXX.

SERMON XXV.

MAN'S ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE ILLUSTRATED AND RECONCILED.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Though a perfect harmony runs through all the doctrines of the gospel, yet to discover and point out this harmony, is in many cases a very arduous task to perform. It is extremely difficult to reconcile many truths with each other, which separately and independently considered, are plain and obvious to every person. To escape this difficulty, the preachers of the gospel too often treat some of the most important articles of Christianity in a manner totally disjointed and unconnected. When they consider the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, they slide over the duty of universal obedience to the divine commands. When they treat of the renovation of the heart, they decline inculcating the obligation of sinners to repent and believe the gospel. And when they handle the subject of divine agency upon the hearts of believers, they avoid urging the practice of those virtues and graces which flow from the sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit. But the inspired apostles adopt a different mode of instruction. They represent the doctrines of the gospel in their proper and intimate connection, in order to place them in the most clear and advantageous light. This appears in the words I have read. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Here the apostle lays before us at one view, both *human activity* and *human dependence*, and represents them as per-

fectly harmonious and consistent. For he considers believers, to whom he is speaking, as being able to act in the most free and voluntary manner, while they are acted upon by the immediate power and energy of the divine Being. It is evident, therefore, that he intended to assert this general truth:

That saints both act and are acted upon by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.

It is the design of the ensuing discourse to make it appear that this sentiment is plainly contained in the word of God; and then to inquire, why it is supposed to be inconsistent and absurd.

The point proposed might be argued from the mere light of nature. It is the dictate of right reason, that no created being is capable of acting independently. Universal and absolute dependence goes into the very idea of a creature; because independence is an attribute of the divine nature which even omnipotence cannot communicate. And since saints are creatures, and creatures too of an inferior order, they can never act otherwise than under the powerful and unremitting energy of the Supreme Being. But not to insist on this argument, I proceed to adduce evidence from scripture, that saints both act and are acted upon by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.

Paul tells us, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Solomon uses a similar mode of expression. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." The Church expresses the same sentiment in her petition to Christ. "Draw me, we will run after thee." This idea is contained in that divine promise made to Christ: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." David says, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." And agreeably to this he prays, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my strength* and my Redeemer." The apostle, impressed with a sense of his absolute dependence, says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And in another place, he says, "In God we live, and move, and have our being."

If we now take a particular view of the several graces and virtues in the exercise of which saints work out their own salvation, we shall find that they always act under the powerful influence of the divine Spirit.

To begin with their first holy exercises, the scripture represents them as acting, and being acted upon, in their regeneration or conversion. This great change is mentioned under a

variety of figures and modes of expression. It is called the circumcision of the heart, and as such ascribed both to God and the creature. On the creature's part, it is commanded as a duty. "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." But as the act of God, it is promised as a blessing. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." The making of a new heart is both enjoined as a duty, and promised as a favor. The injunction is, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit." But the promise is, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." The spiritual resurrection is represented as the work of God and the duty of the sinner. The apostle considers it as the work of God, when he tells believers, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." But God commands the sinner to arise from the spiritual death. "Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The new creation is represented as the work of man as well as the work of God. In one place, the apostle speaking in the name of christians, says, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." But in another place, he enjoins this new creation as a duty. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The turning from sin unto God is sometimes represented as arising from a divine operation, and sometimes as owing to human exertion. As a divine operation, David prays for it repeatedly in the eightieth Psalm. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." Ephraim prays in the same language for himself. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." And the prophet Jeremiah prays, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." But God expressly requires sinners to return unto him, of their own accord. By Isaiah he says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for

he will abundantly pardon." And by Ezekiel he urges the same duty upon sinners. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Love, the first and noblest of all the christian graces, is required as a duty, and yet placed among the gifts of the Spirit. David calls upon good men to love God. "O love the Lord, all ye his saints." And he resolves to exercise the same affection. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." But the apostle tells us that love is of God, and is the production of his Spirit. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Repentance, another holy exercise, is represented as the gift of God and the act of of the penitent. Timothy is directed in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth. Yet the apostle tells us, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Christ declares, "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Notwithstanding this we are told, "Him hath God exalted — to give repentance — and forgiveness of sins." Though faith in Christ be required, yet it is represented as the effect of a divine operation. When the Jews demanded of Christ, "What shall we do that we may work the work of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." But the apostle tells believers, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;" and suggests the same idea, by reminding them that they were risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God. Coming to Christ, which is indeed the same as believing in him, is represented as the exercise of the sinner, while under the influence of a divine operation. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Thus saints are represented as actually loving, repenting, believing and coming to Christ, under the agency of the divine Spirit.

And we must farther observe, that they are represented as exercising not only these, but all other graces and virtues, in the same manner. It is said, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." Nevertheless, we find these fruits of the Spirit required as christian duties. "Giving all diligence," says the apostle Peter, "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." And the apostle Paul gives a similar exhortation to christians. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever

things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In a word, good men are represented as turning from sin unto God; as making themselves a new heart; as raising themselves from spiritual death; as exercising love, repentance, faith, submission, and every other christian grace; as persevering in holiness, enduring unto the end, and being faithful unto death; and yet they are represented as doing all those things by virtue of a divine influence upon their minds. God is represented as beginning the good work in them; as carrying it on until the day of Jesus Christ; and as keeping them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. All this is fully comprised in the text. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Finally, the doctrine under consideration is confirmed by all the commands in the Bible, and by the prayers of all good men. Every command which God has given to men, plainly supposes, that they are moral agents, who are capable of acting freely in the view of motives; because a command could have no more influence, or lay no more obligation upon men, than upon stocks or stones, were men incapable of seeing the nature, and of acting under the power, of motives. As all the commands in the Bible, therefore, require men to put forth some motion, some exercise, some exertion, either of body or of mind, or of both; so they necessarily suppose that men are, in the strictest sense of the word, moral agents, and capable of yielding active, voluntary, rational obedience to the will of God. But yet the prayers of all good men equally suppose that they must be acted upon by a divine operation, in all their virtuous exercises and actions. For when they pray for themselves, that God would give them joy, peace, love, faith, submission, or strengthen and increase these and all other christian graces; their prayers presuppose the necessity of a divine operation upon their hearts, in all their gracious exercises and exertions. And when they pray for the world in general, that God would suppress vice and irreligion every where, convince and convert sinners, comfort and edify saints, and spread the Redeemer's kingdom through the earth; their prayers are founded in the belief that God must work in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Such clear and abundant evidence the Bible gives us that saints both act, and are acted upon, by a divine operation, in all their holy and virtuous exercises.

But still we find many who consider this scriptural doctrine as a gross absurdity, or at least, as the Gordian knot in di-

vinity, which, instead of untying, they violently cut asunder; and so make a sacrifice either of activity, or of dependence. Some give up activity for the sake of dependence; some give up dependence for the sake of activity; and some first give up one and then the other, for the sake of maintaining both. The fatalists give up activity for the sake of dependence. They suppose men are totally dependent and constantly acted upon, as mere machines, and of consequence are not free agents. The Arminians, on the other hand, give up dependence for the sake of activity. They suppose men have a self-determining power, or a power to originate their own volitions, and are capable of acting independently of any divine operation upon their hearts. But many of the Calvinists endeavor to steer a middle course between these two extremes, and first give up activity and then dependence, in order to maintain both. They hold that men are active both before and after regeneration, but passive in regeneration itself. These three classes of men, however they may differ in other respects, seem to agree in this, that no man can act freely and virtuously while he is acted upon by a divine operation; and accordingly unite in pronouncing the doctrine, which we have been laboring to establish, inconsistent and absurd. This naturally leads us to inquire,

In the second place, why activity and dependence are so generally supposed to be inconsistent with each other.

If saints do indeed work out their own salvation with fear and trembling under a divine operation, as has been perhaps sufficiently proved, then this doctrine cannot be supposed to be inconsistent and absurd because it is so in its own nature. If it be true, it must be consistent, whether we can discover its consistency or not.

Nor, in the next place, can any suppose this doctrine is inconsistent and absurd because it is more difficult to apprehend and explain, than many other doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Who can conceive or explain *how* the Supreme Being exists of himself? or *how* he supports the universe? or *how* he fills all places and surveys all objects at one and the same time? But who, except atheists and skeptics, will presume to deny these truths, or venture to call them inconsistent and absurd? Why then should any suppose there is the least absurdity in men's working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, while God at the same time works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure? It is as easy to conceive of this, as to conceive of the divine existence, omnipresence, or universal providence. In all cases of this nature, the facts are plain and intelligible, but the manner of their existence or production is truly mysterious. Our own existence is self-

evident; but how we were formed is to us a profound mystery. Our constant dependence on the Deity for the continuation of existence is capable of strict demonstration; but how God upholds us every moment, we are utterly unable to explain. So our dependence on the Deity to work in us both to will and to do, is equally demonstrable; but how God operates on our minds in our free and voluntary exercises, we are equally unable to comprehend. There is, therefore, no more mystery in this doctrine than in every object we see, or every sound we hear, or every breath we draw. The subject before us may be involved in more difficulties than some other subjects which have been less examined and controverted; but there is a wide difference between *difficulties* and *mysteries*. Though we can never remove mysteries, yet we can sometimes remove difficulties. And when the difficulties are removed from a difficult subject, it then becomes plain and intelligible. Many points in physic and philosophy, which were once attended with great difficulties, have now become easy and familiar to the masters of those sciences. And nothing farther is necessary to render the subject of man's dependence and activity level to every one's apprehension, than to remove the difficulties with which it has been embarrassed by the tongue and pen of controversy.

It may be proper to observe, once more, that none can suppose this doctrine to be inconsistent because they have found it to be so by their own experience. To believers we make the appeal. Did you ever feel the least inconsistency between activity and dependence? Did you ever perceive the divine agency to obstruct your own? Did you ever find your moral powers suspended in regeneration, in love to God, in repentance, in faith, or in any other holy affection? Were you ever conscious of being less able to grow in grace, and to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because God wrought in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure? Should you all speak the language of your own experience upon this subject, we presume you would with one voice declare that the Spirit of the Lord never destroyed, nor even obstructed, your liberty.

The question now returns, why is it so generally supposed that man's activity and dependence are totally irreconcilable? I answer, this may be chiefly or wholly owing to the following reasons.

1. Some may suppose that human dependence and activity cannot be reconciled, because they are unwilling to see the consistency of a doctrine which throws them absolutely into the hands of God. The apostle evidently suggests this idea,

when he introduces a man disputing about his dependence with his Maker. "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Many choose to deny that they are moral agents, rather than to own that they are dependent agents, who are obliged to act under the controlling influence of the Supreme Being. They wish either to enjoy dependence without freedom, or freedom without dependence; and therefore they will not, if they can possibly help it, see that harmony between both, which places them in a situation so extremely interesting and hazardous.

2. Some may suppose that dependence cannot be reconciled with activity, because they are conscious of being active, but not of being dependent. This is a strong hold in which many intrench themselves, and feel entirely out of the reach of all arguments in favor of a divine operation upon the hearts of moral agents. They appeal to common sense as an infallible proof that men act freely and voluntarily, without feeling the least compulsion or influence from the hand of God. It is undoubtedly true that we are all conscious of activity, and intuitively know that we are free moral agents. But to what does this dictate of common sense amount? Does it prove that we are not dependent upon the Supreme Being for all our moral exercises? Most certainly it does not. For supposing God does really work in us both to will and to do, we cannot be conscious of his agency, but only of our own, in willing and doing. Though in God we live, and move, and have our being, yet we are never conscious of his almighty hand, which upholds us in existence every moment. It is indeed as impossible that we should feel the operation of God upon our hearts while he works in us both to will and to do, as it was that Adam should have felt the forming hand of God in his creation. If Adam, therefore, could not have proved from his experience that he was self existent, we cannot prove from our experience that we are independent, in all our free and voluntary exertions. Hence our consciousness of moral freedom is no evidence against our absolute dependence upon God for all the inward motions and exercises of our hearts.

3. Many, by reasoning unjustly on this subject, persuade themselves that they cannot act while they are acted upon. They reason from matter to mind, which is by no means conclusive. Since matter is incapable of acting while it is acted upon, they conclude the mind must also be incapable of acting while it is acted upon. They suppose, if we are as dependent

upon God for all our voluntary exercises, as a clock or watch is dependent upon weights or springs for all its motions, then we are as incapable of moral agency as these, or any other mere machines. But the fallacy of this mode of reasoning may be easily exposed. The fallacy lies here. It takes for granted, that the only reason why a clock, or a watch, or any other machine, is not a moral agent, is simply because it is acted upon, or depends upon some power out of itself for all its motions. But is this true? Let us make the trial. Suppose a clock, which has hithertò been dependent and moved by weights and wheels, should this moment become independent, and move of itself. Is this clock now any more a moral agent than it was before? Are its motions now any more moral exercises, or any more worthy of praise or blame, than they were before? By no means. But why not? Because, notwithstanding it is now independent, and moves of itself, yet being still matter, and not mind, it moves without perception, reason, conscience and volition, which are attributes essential to a moral agent. The reason why a clock, or watch, or any other machine, is incapable of moral agency, is not because it is either dependent or independent; but simply because it is senseless matter, and totally destitute of all the principles of moral action. As neither dependence nor independence can make a machine a mind, so neither dependence nor independence can make a mind a machine. It is impertinent, therefore, to reason from matter to mind upon this subject. Our dependence on the Deity cannot deprive us of moral freedom, unless it deprives us of our moral powers. If God, while working in us both to will and to do, only leaves us in possession of understanding, conscience and volition, then he leaves us in full possession of moral agency, which must necessarily continue as long as these intellectual and moral powers remain. Indeed, there is nothing in the whole circle of created objects, which affords any argument to prove that man's dependence destroys his moral agency. There is no argument to be drawn from material objects to prove this; because they are entirely destitute of all mental properties. And there is no argument to be drawn from intelligent objects to prove this; because there is no species of intelligent creatures that we are acquainted with, who are less dependent on God for all their mental exercises than we are. Hence it appears to be absolutely impossible for any to prove that human dependence and activity are inconsistent with each other. But I must observe once more,

4. That some involve themselves in confusion by reasoning too far upon this subject. They carry reason out of its province, and employ it in deciding that which it has no power nor au-

thority to decide. Many complain that they have often attempted to reconcile dependence with activity, but after all their efforts, have been obliged to give up the subject, as surpassing the reach of their comprehension. And to keep themselves in countenance, they bring in Mr. Locke, that oracle of reason, who ingenuously owns that he could never reconcile prescience in the Deity with human liberty; or, in other words, man's dependence with moral freedom. This however will not appear strange, if we consider that it belongs not to the office of reason to reconcile these two points. Though activity and dependence are perfectly consistent, yet they are totally distinct; and of course fall under the notice of distinct faculties of the mind. Dependence falls under the cognizance of reason; but activity falls under the cognizance of common sense. It is the part of reason to demonstrate our dependence upon God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. But it is the part of common sense to afford us an intuitive knowledge of our activity and moral freedom. We must therefore consult both reason and common sense, in order to discover the consistency between activity and dependence.

Nor is this a singular case. There are many other subjects upon which we can form no proper judgment, without the united aid of reason and common sense. Should I observe to a person walking with me in a garden, that a certain flower is the product of divine power, and possesses a beautiful color, and should he call upon me to prove my assertions, I should be obliged to have recourse first to reason, and then to common sense. I could prove by reason, that the flower was the product of divine power; but as to its color, I could only refer him to the evidence of his own eyes. If I should see a servant destroy his master's property, I could prove to him by reason, that he had injured his master; but I could not prove to him by reason, that he had broken a moral obligation and committed a crime. I could only represent the nature and extent of the injury which he had done to his master, by this instance of his conduct, and then refer him to the dictates of his own conscience; and if he should still continue unconvinced of his criminality, it would be out of my power to give him conviction, by any arguments drawn from reason. You may read a fine poem, and your reason may discover the unity of design, the connection of parts, and the regular construction of periods; but if at the same time, you perceive the harmony of numbers, the sublimity of sentiment, and the beauty of character, this is not owing to any peculiar intellectual acumen, but to a correct taste, or the finer feelings of human nature, well cultivated and improved. These instances clearly show that reason and

common sense have different offices, and are to be employed in discovering different truths. It is not very strange, therefore, that we are obliged to employ both reason and common sense, in order to reconcile activity and dependence. Nor is there any ground to imagine that their consistency with each other is less certain, because it cannot be discovered by reason alone, nor common sense alone, but by the united assistance of both. For if we know by reason that we are dependent, and know by common sense that we are active, then we know that both activity and dependence do, in fact, harmoniously meet and unite in our minds. And this mode of reconciling activity and dependence seems calculated to give entire satisfaction to any person who is pressed with the difficulty of seeing their harmony and connection. Let us apply it to the case of such a person. Does reason teach you that you are a dependent creature? Does common sense teach you that you are a free, moral agent? Do you never experience the least inconsistency between your activity and dependence? And do you feel as free and voluntary in all your actions, as if you were altogether independent of the Supreme Being? If all this be true, you must acknowledge that you have the evidence of reason that you act dependently, that you have the evidence of common sense that you act freely, and that you have the evidence of constant experience that your activity and dependence are entirely consistent. You are therefore as certain of the truth and consistency of your activity and dependence, as you can be of any other truth, whose evidence depends upon the united testimony of reason and common sense.

SERMON XXVI.

MAN'S ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE ILLUSTRATED AND RECONCILED.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Having endeavored to reconcile man's activity and dependence in the preceding discourse, I proceed to draw a number of inferences from the subject, which may serve to throw light upon some of the most difficult things which are to be found either in the word or in the works of God.

1. If it be true that men act, while they are acted upon by a divine operation, then their actions are their own, and not the actions of God. The divine agency is not human agency, nor human agency the divine agency. Though God does work in men to repent, to believe and to obey, yet God does not repent, nor believe, nor obey, but the persons themselves, on whom he operates. When God works in men to will and to do, he does not act in their stead, but they act for themselves; and therefore what they do is entirely distinct from what he does. Whether they act virtuously or viciously, their actions are their own, and the praise or the blame is their own, as much as if they acted independently. Some suppose that if God produces our moral exercises, then they must be his, or at least exactly resemble his, in their moral quality. But there is no foundation to draw this conclusion, since our moral exercises are the *productions* of the divine *power*, and not *emanations* of the divine *nature*. It is true, all emanations of the divine nature must necessarily partake of the qualities of the divine nature, as much as all streams must necessarily partake of the

qualities of the fountain from which they flow. But the works of God are not emanations of his nature, but only the fruits of his power. No created object, therefore, bears the least resemblance of the Deity simply because he made it. We know God has created a multitude of serpents, vipers, and other noxious animals, which, though they prove him to be possessed of infinite power, yet afford no evidence of his being possessed of any malignity which resembles the sting of scorpions, or the poison of asps. If God must necessarily stamp his own natural and moral image upon every production of his hand, then a flower, a dove, or a monster, must bear the natural and moral image of its Maker, as much as a saint, or an angel. Saints and angels do, indeed, bear both the natural and moral image of God; but they bear this image not simply because he gave them existence, but because he was pleased to give them such an *intelligent* and *holy* existence as resembles his natural and moral perfections. It is, therefore, as consistent with the moral rectitude of the Deity to produce sinful, as holy exercises in the minds of men. His operations and their voluntary exercises are totally distinct. And if we only make and keep up this distinction between divine and human agency, we shall clearly perceive that no imputation can be fastened upon the moral character of God while he works in all mankind both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2. If men always act under a divine operation, then they always act of *necessity*, though not of *compulsion*. The Deity, by working in them to will and to do, lays them under an absolute necessity of acting freely; but this is directly opposed to compulsion. God may cause men to move, without making them willing to move; but he cannot cause them to act, without making them willing to act. Action always implies choice; and choice always implies motive. It is out of the power of the Deity, therefore, to oblige men to act, without making them willing to act in the view of motives. Accordingly, when he works in us both to will and to do, he first exhibits motives before our minds, and then excites us to act voluntarily in the view of the motives exhibited. And in thus acting voluntarily in the view of the motives presented to us, we exercise the most perfect liberty or moral freedom. For we can frame no higher idea of moral freedom, than acting voluntarily, or just as we please, in the view of motives. This however is perfectly consistent with moral necessity. Suppose a man at leisure desires to read, and some person presents him a Bible and a novel. Though he knows the contents of each of these books, yet it depends upon a divine operation on his mind, which of them he shall choose to read; for the bare per-

ception of motive is incapable of producing volition. If in this case God works in him to will to read the Bible, it is his own choice in the view of the object chosen. He is not compelled to read the Bible, though he is necessarily obliged to read it. He acts under a moral necessity, but not under a natural compulsion. Take another illustration from scripture. God said to Samuel on a certain day, To-morrow I will send thee a man whom thou shalt anoint king over Israel. The man proved to be Saul. The story is this: Saul's father lost his asses, and sent Saul with a servant to search for them. They went and searched, until they despaired of success. But just as they were determining to return, the servant proposed to go to the man of God. The proposal being agreeable to Saul, he cheerfully complied with it; and they both repaired to the house of Samuel, who treated them with peculiar respect. The next day Saul was anointed king over Israel, and the purpose of God in sending him to Samuel was completely fulfilled. Now in every step of his journey, Saul acted freely in the view of motives. He left his father's house from the motive of his father's authority; and he went to the house of Samuel from the motive suggested by his servant. But we are to remember that God sent him to Samuel, and directed every step he took to reach his house. Hence there was a necessary and infallible connection between Saul's actions and the motives from which he acted. And this certain connection could be owing to no other cause than a secret divine influence on his will, which gave energy and success to the motives which induced him to execute the designs of providence. God made him *willing* to go to Samuel, but did not *compel* him to go. He led him thither by a moral necessity, without the least compulsion or constraint. And thus men always act both necessarily and freely, while God works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

3. If saints can work out their own salvation, under a positive influence of the Deity, then sinners can work out their own destruction under his positive influence. As saints can act while they are acted upon, so sinners can act while they are acted upon. As saints can act freely under a divine influence, so sinners can act freely under a divine influence. And as saints can act virtuously under a divine agency, so sinners can act criminally under a divine agency. Hence it is just as easy to see that sinners can work out their own destruction, as that saints can work out their own salvation, under the operation of the Deity. And this is agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture. Pharaoh is represented as acting under the positive influence of the Divine Being, who led him on in the path to

ruin. It is repeatedly said that God hardened his heart, and repeatedly said that he hardened his own heart. According to the account given of his conduct towards God, and of God's conduct towards him, he was as really acted upon in working out his own destruction, as saints are in working out their own salvation. The unbelieving Jews, in our Saviour's day, were judicially hardened; and yet they were severely reproved for hardening themselves. The same passage in the sixth of Isaiah is applied to them in both these senses. The passage stands thus in the prophet: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." This appears to be a judicial hardening; but yet Christ applies it to those who hardened themselves. "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The apostle John considers the Jews as under a judicial blindness, and applies this passage to them as descriptive of their guilty and miserable condition. "Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they might not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." The apostle Paul, however, cites this passage as a proof of their hardening their own hearts. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." These different applications of the same text can be reconciled only on the supposition that the prophet, Christ, and the apostles, meant to convey the idea that sinners work out their own destruction under the positive influence of the Deity. And this is expressly asserted by the apostle Paul, concerning the reprobate Jews.

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," or, as it is in the margin, hardened.

4. If God can work in saints both to will and to do that which is virtuous and holy; then he might have made man upright, and formed him in his own moral image, at first. Some suppose it was out of the power of God to create Adam at first, in righteousness and true holiness; because righteousness and true holiness belong to the heart, and are free, voluntary exercises. But, though every species of moral rectitude be a free, voluntary exercise of the heart, yet it may nevertheless be the fruit of a divine operation. The heart may be created as well as the understanding, or moral exercises as well as natural faculties. It appears, from what has been said, that the hearts of saints are created, or that their free and voluntary exercises are the production of divine power. Where then is the difficulty of conceiving that God made man upright at first, and created him in his own moral image? If saints may be the workmanship of God created unto good works in the meridian of life, then Adam might have been the workmanship of God created unto good works in the first moment of his existence. God was as able to work in Adam both to will and to do that which was virtuous and holy the first moment of his creation, as he is to work in saints both to will and to do that which is virtuous and holy in any period of their lives. The cases are exactly similar. If holiness can be created in one man, it may be in another; and if it can be created in one period of life, it may be in another. There is nothing, therefore, in the supposition of man's original rectitude, which is repugnant either to the nature of holiness, as a voluntary exercise, or to the nature of man as a moral agent.

5. Since God can work in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure, it is as easy to account for the first offence of Adam as for any other sin. Many who believe his original rectitude, suppose it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to account for his first act of disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit. But inasmuch as they acknowledge the fact, they endeavor in some way or other to solve the difficulty.

Some say that Adam, being necessarily dependent, was necessarily mutable, and liable to fall. It is true, indeed, Adam was necessarily dependent and liable to fall; but by whom was he exposed to this evil? Not by himself, not by Satan, not by any created agent. God can make creatures immutable with respect to all things but himself. Angels and the spirits of just men above, are immutable with respect to all things but the Deity. So long, therefore, as Adam retained his original recti-

tude, he was equally immutable in his moral character, and stood above the power and influence of Satan, or any other malignant seducer.

Some say that God having made man upright, left him to the freedom of his own will; in consequence of which he sinned and fell. That God left man to the freedom of his own will must be allowed; but how this can account for his first transgression is hard to conceive. Every moral agent is left to the freedom of his own will so long as he remains a moral agent; because freedom of will is essential to moral agency. And there is no evidence from scripture or reason, that man was any more left to the freedom of his own will before, than after his fall. But if by being left to the freedom of his own will be meant that God withdrew some aid or support which he had given him before, and which was necessary in order to resist temptation, then such a suspension of divine aid or support must have excused him for eating the forbidden fruit; since there could have been no criminality in his not resisting a temptation which was above his natural power to resist. Besides, there is an absurdity in supposing that Adam could be led into sin by the violence of temptation, while his heart remained perfectly holy. For a perfectly holy heart perfectly hates every motive, every suggestion, every temptation to sin. This was exemplified in the conduct of Christ, when he was so artfully and violently assaulted by the devil. Satan's tempting him to disobey his Father's will, instead of leading him to comply, only served to excite his resentment against the tempter himself. And just so the devil's tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, must have excited his love rather than his hatred to God, had he remained perfectly holy. It is impossible to conceive, therefore, that Adam's pure heart was corrupted, or drawn into sin, by the mere force of external temptation.

Nor will it relieve any difficulty on this subject to say that Adam and Eve were deceived, when they partook of the forbidden fruit. For their deception must have been either voluntary or involuntary. If it were voluntary, then their sin was the cause of their deception, and not their deception the cause of their sin. But if their deception were involuntary, then it entirely excused them. For their eating the forbidden fruit while their hearts were perfectly holy, and they really supposed they ought to do it, would have been a duty instead of a crime.

As these and all other methods to account for the fall of Adam by the instrumentality of second causes, are insufficient to remove the difficulty, it seems necessary to have recourse to the divine agency, and to suppose that God wrought in Adam both to will and to do in his first transgression. As Adam

acted freely while he was acted upon before he fell, so he acted freely while he was acted upon at the moment of his fall. His first sin was a free, voluntary exercise, produced by a divine operation in the view of motives. Satan placed certain motives before his mind, which, by a divine energy, took hold of his heart and led him into sin. In this view, Adam's first sin is as easy to be accounted for as David's in numbering the people; as Pharaoh's in refusing to let the people go; as Ahab's in going up to Ramoth-Gilead; or as any other man's sin since the fall. This, perhaps, is a full solution of the first sin in this world, and of consequence, of the first sin in the universe.

6. If God can work in moral agents both to will and to do of his good pleasure, then we may easily account for the moral depravity of infants. Next to the first sin of Adam, the first sin in his posterity is supposed to be the most difficult to account for.

Some suppose that the human soul, as well as the human body, proceeds directly from the parents who naturally and necessarily convey their own moral image to their children. And upon this principle, they suppose that after our first parents became corrupt, they conveyed a corrupt nature to their children, and they again to theirs; and so a corrupt nature has ever since the fall been transmitted from parents to children, and will continue to be transmitted in the same manner to the latest posterity. This solution, however, by no means gives satisfaction. We are not certain that the soul of the child does proceed directly from the parents. Scripture and reason rather lead us to suppose that the soul is a divine production, and proceeds immediately from the Father of spirits. But even allowing that the soul does proceed, according to a divine constitution, from the parents, yet this will not account for its moral pollution. For moral depravity consists in the free, voluntary exercises of a moral agent; and of consequence cannot be transmitted by one person to another. Adam's moral impurity or defilement was his own voluntary wickedness, which could not, by any divine constitution or appointment, become the moral impurity or defilement of his natural offspring, either in whole or in part. Besides, if parents naturally convey their moral likeness to their children, then Adam, after he became holy, must have conveyed holiness to his children, and they likewise to theirs; and so there must have been a constant succession of holy families down to this day; which we find is contrary to universal observation and experience.

Others suppose that the depravity of the soul originates from the mortality of the body. Though they allow that the soul comes pure and clean from the hands of God, yet they

imagine a corrupt mortal body must soon defile it. They say, while the minds of children are weak and ignorant, their bodily appetites and passions gain the ascendancy, and lead them into sinful courses and evil habits. But this supposition is clogged with insurmountable difficulties. How can a corrupt body corrupt a pure mind? At most, the body can afford only temptations to sin; but temptations of themselves have no power to corrupt a pure heart. Christ was once an infant. He grew, like other infants, in body and mind; but yet his mind was never corrupted by his body. Though he was subject to hunger, thirst, pain, weariness, and mortality, yet these bodily appetites and infirmities never led him into intemperance, impatience, or any other moral evil. His soul was holy, harmless, undefiled, while united to an earthly, feeble, mortal body. Hence it appears to be contrary to fact, that the depravity of the soul should arise from the mortality of the body, or that the mortal bodies of infants should morally defile their pure and immortal spirits.

But though we cannot suppose that infants derive their moral corruption from Adam, nor from their own mortal bodies, yet we can easily conceive of their becoming depraved in consequence of the first apostacy. God constituted such a connection between Adam and his posterity, that if he sinned, they should all become sinners. Accordingly, in consequence of Adam's first transgression, God now brings his posterity into the world in a state of moral depravity. But how? The answer is easy. When God forms the souls of infants, he forms them with moral powers, and makes them men in miniature. And being men in miniature, he works in them as he does in other men, both to will and to do of his good pleasure; or produces those moral exercises in their hearts, in which moral depravity properly and essentially consists. Moral depravity can take place no where but in moral agents; and moral agents can never act but only as they are acted upon by a divine operation. It is just as easy, therefore, to account for moral depravity in infancy, as in any other period of life.

7. If God can work in saints both to will and to do of his good pleasure, then he can convert sinners consistently with their activity and moral freedom. God operates precisely in the same manner in producing the first exercise of grace, as in producing the second, or any other. All that he does, in converting or regenerating a sinner, is to work in him to will and to do that which is holy, instead of that which is sinful. The sinner is not passive, but active in this change. He acts as freely while God turns him from sin to holiness, as he ever did in his life. He feels no violence done to his will, nor the least

constraint thrown upon his moral freedom. God has often converted some of the most hardened and obstinate sinners. He subdued the hearts of his rebellious people in Babylon. He converted, in one day, three thousand of those who had been concerned in crucifying the Lord of glory. He met Paul on his way to Damascus, and instantaneously turned that blasphemer and persecutor into a meek and humble follower of Christ. And he can now convert as many and as great sinners as he pleases, in perfect consistency with the free and voluntary exercise of all their natural powers. God has no occasion for sending sinners to another world in order to soften and change their hearts; for he is always able to work in them both to will and to do that which is pleasing in his sight, without destroying, or even obstructing their moral freedom.

8. If God always works in men both to will and to do, then they are as able to work out their own salvation as to perform the common actions of life. The only reason why sinners suppose they are less able to work out their own salvation than to do the common actions of life, is because they imagine that they need more divine assistance in working out their own salvation than in doing any thing else. If they are urged to repent, they say they cannot repent of themselves, for repentance is the fruit of the Spirit. If they are urged to believe in Christ, they say they cannot believe of themselves, for faith is the gift of God. And if they are urged to make themselves a new heart, they say they cannot do this of themselves, for it is the work of God to give them a new heart. These expressions plainly intimate that they suppose they always act of themselves, except in the concerns of religion; and, of consequence, that they are less able to perform religious duties than the common actions of life. But there is no just ground for this conclusion. They never do act of themselves. They live, and move, and have their being in God, who constantly works in them both to will and to do in every instance of their conduct. They are as able, therefore, to do right as to do wrong; and to do their duty as to neglect their duty; to love God as to hate God; to choose life as to choose death; to walk in the narrow way to heaven as to walk in the broad way to hell; and to turn from sin to holiness as to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Hence they are expressly required to begin to be holy, and to perform the very act of turning, repenting and changing the heart. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord." Isaiah, lv. 7. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die,

O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Ezekiel, xxxiii. 11. and xviii. 31, 32. "Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." Joel, ii. 12, 13. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded." James, iv. 8. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof." Proverbs, i. 20, 21, 22. "O Jerusalem wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jeremiah, iv. 14. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." Isaiah, i. 16, 17. If there be any justice or propriety in these commands, then sinners are as able to turn from sin, to change their hearts, or to begin to be holy, as to perform any other religious duty or common action.

Besides, the sacred writers borrow similitudes from the common conduct of men, to illustrate the duty and obligation of sinners to repent and embrace the gospel. The evangelical prophet cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." These similitudes plainly suppose that every sinner is as able to embrace the gospel as a thirsty man is to drink water, or a hungry man to eat the most delicious food. In the parable of the marriage supper, God is represented as sending forth his servants to invite sinners to come and receive the fruits of his love. This invitation carries the idea that sinners are as able to come to the gospel feast, as to come to any other to which they are kindly invited. Take away this point of resemblance, and the parable is totally unmeaning, or extremely impertinent. The parable of the prodigal son is designed to illustrate the immediate duty of sinners to return to God, from whom they have unreasonably departed. But where is the beauty or propriety of the parable, unless sinners are as able to return to their heavenly Father as an undutiful, wandering child is to return to his earthly parent? By the obedience of the Rechabites, God reproved the disobedience of his own people. But how did that example reach the case, unless the

Israelites were as able to obey the commands of God, as the Rechabites were to obey the command of their father? It is the plain language of these similitudes, that sinners are as able to work out their own salvation, with fear and trembling, as to perform the most common and ordinary actions of life. Hence there is the same propriety in exhorting them to eat, and drink, and do every thing to the glory of God, as there is in exhorting them to do any thing at all. And hence too that whole system of unregenerate duties, which has been built on the principle that sinners are passive in regeneration, and of course are under an ethico-physical inability to do any thing in a holy and gracious manner, appears to be without the least foundation in scripture or reason.

9. Since God works in all mankind both to will and to do, there appears no reasonable objection against the doctrine of divine decrees. If God be a perfectly wise agent, he must determine all his own conduct. But he cannot determine all his own conduct, without determining how he will work in us both to will and to do; and by determining this, he must necessarily determine how we shall will and do, through every period of our existence. It is just as certain, therefore, that God determines all our actions, as that he determines all his own. But the divine decrees, so long as they lie in the divine mind unexecuted, have no more influence upon us than they had before we existed. And when they actually reach us, or when God actually fulfils them upon us, he only works in us both to will and to do, agreeably to his eternal purpose; which operation, we have seen, is entirely consistent with our own free agency. Nor do the decrees of God subject us to the least disadvantage with respect to time, or eternity. For since God works in us both to will and to do, it absolutely depends upon his determination, whether we shall be holy and happy, or sinful and miserable, in this life and in that which is to come. And if all this depends upon his determination, it is of no consequence to us *when* he determines our characters and conditions, whether in time or eternity; because we know from the perfection of his nature, that his determination must be precisely the same, whether formed before or since he brought us into existence. In a word, if there be no objection against God's working in us both to will and to do, there can be none against his decreeing from eternity to work in us both to will and to do. His decrees have no influence upon us until they reach us, and when they do reach us, they reach us by that divine agency which coincides with all the liberty we are capable of exercising, or even of conceiving.

10. It appears from God's working in all men both to will

and to do, that he governs the moral as well as the natural world. This is denied by many who believe in divine providence. Though they acknowledge that God has a controlling influence over all the material and animal creation, yet they suppose that it is out of his power to govern the free and voluntary actions of moral agents. But if he works in all men both to will and to do of his good pleasure, then he governs the moral as well as the natural world, and both by a positive agency, and not a bare permission. It is impossible for the Deity to govern any of his creatures or works by permission, because his permission would be nothing short of annihilation. A prince may exercise permission towards his subjects, because they are able to act without his support or assistance; but God cannot exercise permission towards his rational creatures, because they cannot act without his working in them both to will and to do. The Deity, therefore, is so far from permitting moral agents to act independently of himself, that, on the other hand, he puts forth a positive influence to make them act, in every instance of their conduct, just as he pleases. He bends all the moral, as well as all the natural world, to his own views; and makes all his creatures, as well as all his works, answer the ends for which they were created. Hence this will for ever remain a just definition of his providence: "His most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

11. If sinners are able to act freely while they are acted upon by the Deity, then they have no manner of excuse for neglecting to obey any of his commands. They all acknowledge that they have no excuse for neglecting to obey any divine command which they are able to obey, and that they should be able to obey all the divine commands, were it not for their dependence upon divine influence in all their moral exercises; so that finally all their excuses centre and terminate in their absolute dependence upon God. If, therefore, this shelter fails them, all their excuses vanish, and every divine command lies upon them in its full force and obligation. But we have shown that their dependence affords them no protection, because it is not the ground of their inability. They can act as freely as if they were not dependent; and they are as able to obey the divine commands as if they could act of themselves. They can love God, repent of sin, believe in Christ, and perform every religious duty, as well as they can think, or speak, or walk. They have no cloak for the least sin, whether internal or external. And if they are ever brought under conviction by the divine Spirit, their excuses will all forsake them, and their consciences will condemn them for impenitence, unbelief and

hardness of heart, as much as for any other sins in the course of their lives. Their mouths will be stopped, and they will stand speechless and self condemned before God. They will feel that their inability is a crime, and not a calamity. They will feel that they have been free and voluntary in all their disobedience, and therefore deserve God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come. Such are the views and feelings which sinners must have sooner or later, if they ever embrace the gospel and secure the salvation of their souls. Let them, therefore, immediately give up all their excuses, which cannot stand before the bar of God, nor even before the bar of their own enlightened consciences. Let them no longer cast the blame of their sins upon God, but take it to themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. God now commandeth all men every where to repent; and except they do repent, they must unavoidably and eternally perish.

12. If God works in saints both to will and to do in all their gracious exercises, then they ought to be clothed with humility, and walk softly before him. Who hath made them to differ? and what have they that they have not received? All their future exercises are under the divine influence, without which they can do nothing. Let them always acknowledge God in all their ways, that he may direct their paths. Let them watch and pray without ceasing, and work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Renouncing all self dependence, and remembering Noah, Lot, David, Peter and themselves, let them trust in God alone, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

HUMAN AND DIVINE AGENCY INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. — GENESIS, xlv. 5.

IT is the peculiar excellence of sacred history to display the hand and counsel of God in the government of the moral world. The inspired writers relate not only the free and voluntary actions of men, but represent them as inseparably connected with the free and voluntary agency of the Deity. This circumstance renders sacred history much more interesting and instructive than profane, which contains little more than the bare recital of past actions and events. The agency and design of God in all the concerns of men give them their greatest importance. Though the history of Joseph contains a great variety of singular and surprising events, yet these would appear comparatively trifling, were they not related in connection with the ultimate design and superintendency of God in bringing them to pass. In this view, there is something extremely interesting in the account of Joseph's making himself known to his brethren. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me; and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you; and they came

near; and he said I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." This was as much as to say, Though you meant to destroy a brother's life, and break a father's heart, yet I freely and heartily forgive you. And though you meant to defeat the design and control the hand of God, for which you ought to repent in dust and ashes, yet be not grieved that the event took place; for God was the supreme agent in it, and made use of you as instruments to accomplish the wise and benevolent purpose of preserving your lives, and the lives of millions in the midst of the present extensive and destructive famine. In this address to his brethren, Joseph represents God as doing what they had done. Though they sent him into Egypt, yet he represents God as sending him thither. He more fully expresses this idea in the words immediately succeeding the text. "These two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God." That is, God was the primary and supreme agent, in bringing about this great and most happy event. This is the truth which now naturally falls under our consideration:

That the scripture ascribes the actions of men both to themselves and to God.

I shall endeavor to illustrate the truth, the propriety, and the importance of this doctrine.

1. We are to consider, that the scripture does ascribe the actions of men, both to themselves and to God. It will be universally allowed that the scripture ascribes the actions of men to themselves. It ascribes to Abel his faith, to Cain his unbelief, to Job his patience, and to Moses his meekness. Having just premised this, I proceed to adduce instances in which the scripture ascribes the actions of men to God as well as to themselves. The first instance that occurs is in the history of Joseph. It is said his brethren sold him into Egypt, and at the same time God is said to send him thither. It is said God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. The same mode of expression is used in reference to the Egyptians. They hardened their own hearts when they presumed to follow the Israelites into the midst of the sea, with a fixed design to overtake and destroy them. But God himself said he would harden their hearts on that occasion. "And I, behold I will harden the hearts of the Egyp-

tians, and they shall follow them and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." Saul went of his own accord to Samuel, yet God says he sent him. Shimei cursed David of his own accord, yet David ascribed his conduct to the divine agency. The Sabeans and Chaldeans stripped Job of his servants and substance; yet he says: "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." God is said to do what the king of Assyria did. "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath accomplished his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." God is said to blind the minds and harden the hearts of those who blinded their own minds and hardened their own hearts, in the days of Christ and the apostles. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." But we know that it was Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, who insulted, buffeted, and crucified the Lord of glory. I might mention God's giving love to those that love, repentance to those that repent, faith to those that believe, and purification to those who purify themselves. But enough has been said to show that the scripture ascribes the actions of men both to themselves and to God. I proceed to show,

II. The propriety of ascribing human actions to both human and divine agency. This indeed looks like a paradox, and is considered by many as a palpable absurdity, or a profound mystery Accordingly, much ingenuity and learned labor have been employed to explain away those passages of scripture which ascribe the actions of men to God as well as to themselves. No pains have been spared to make it appear that all human actions are absolutely independent of, and unconnected with, any divine operation upon the human heart. And could this be established, it would be difficult to show the propriety of ascribing the actions of men both to God and themselves. But the truth is, reason and scripture unitedly afford a solid foundation for this mode of speaking.

Mankind are creatures, and by the law of nature absolutely dependent upon God. We cannot conceive that even Omnipotence is able to form independent agents, because this would

be to endow them with divinity. And since all men are dependent agents, all their motions, exercises or actions, must originate from a divine efficiency. We can no more act, than we can exist, without the constant aid and influence of the Deity. This is the dictate of reason, which is confirmed by the declarations of scripture. We read that in God "we live, and move, and have our being." The wise man tells us, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." The apostle acknowledges that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." This all good men believe to be true when they ask God to give them grace, and assist them in the performance of every duty. The apostle exhorts christians to live under a habitual sense of their dependence upon God in all their gracious exercises. He addresses them in this form: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And he prays for believers in the same strain in which he exhorts them to duty. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ." Now if men always act under a divine influence, then there is a great propriety in ascribing their actions to God as well as to themselves. If they do any thing whatever, it may be truly said it was done by the finger of God. If Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, God may be said to have sent him thither. If the Jews crucified Christ and put him to grief, it may be said he was smitten of God and afflicted. If one nation destroys another, it may be said God destroyed that nation. If one man makes himself rich, God may be said to make him rich. If one man makes himself poor, God may be said to make him poor. If one man turn from sin, God may be said to turn him. If one man follow hard after God, God may be said to draw him. If one man grow in grace, God may be said to carry on the good work he had begun in his heart. There is no occasion, therefore, of rectifying that mode of speaking on this subject which runs through the Bible. It is strictly just and agreeable to truth. Human agency is always inseparably connected with divine agency. And though it may be proper in some cases to speak of man's agency alone, and of God's agency alone, yet it is always proper to ascribe the actions of men not only to themselves, but to God. The propriety of the

scripture phraseology on this subject is so plain and obvious, that it is strange so many have objected against it, and endeavored to explain it away. But since this is the case, it seems very necessary to show,

III. The importance of ascribing the actions of men to God, as well as to themselves. We have no reason to suppose that the sacred writers would have used such a mode of speaking, unless it were necessary and important. They wrote with a view to instruct, and not to perplex mankind. And if we properly consider the natural tendency of this mode of speaking, we shall be convinced that it is of great importance, and answers very valuable purposes. It is the design of God, in all his works, to set his own character and the character of all his rational and accountable creatures in the truest and strongest light. This leads me observe,

1. It is a matter of importance that the actions of men should be ascribed to themselves. They are real and proper agents in all their voluntary exercises and exertions. Their actions are all their own, and as much their own as if they acted without any dependence upon God, or any other being in the universe. If a man loves God, his love is his own exercise, and a real virtue and beauty in his character. If a man hates God, his hatred is his own exercise, and a real sin and blemish in his character. All the actions of Adam, both before and after his fall, were the fruit of his own choice, and formed his character both as a good and a bad man. And this is true of all his descendants, whether saints or sinners. Their actions are all their own, and constitute them either holy or unholy, virtuous or vicious, and worthy of praise or blame, reward or punishment. Hence it is a matter of importance that the scripture should ascribe the actions of men to themselves. Unless God represented men as authors of their own actions, he would not represent them in their true light. This clearly appears in the case of Joseph and his brethren. Though God foreordained and foretold their conduct, though he sent Joseph into Egypt, and made use of his brethren as means to convey him thither, yet he could not have set their amazing inhumanity, malice and criminality in a true light, unless he had ascribed these actions to themselves, and expressly said that they sold him into Egypt. This was their act and deed, which rendered them extremely criminal, not only in the sight of God and of their brother, but in the view of their own consciences. On the other hand, God could not have placed the amiable character of Joseph in a true light, if he had not ascribed his virtuous, mild and benevolent conduct to himself. It was important that the character of Joseph should be set in contrast with the character of his breth-

ren; and for this reason, it was no less important that both he and they should be represented as the authors of their own actions. The same is true with respect to all mankind. Though God is as really concerned in all their conduct as he was in the conduct of Joseph and his brethren, yet their actions ought to be ascribed to themselves, in order that their character may be exhibited in a true light. This is important now, and will be still more important at the great and last day. Accordingly it is represented that God will ascribe the actions of the righteous to the righteous, and the actions of the wicked to the wicked, and reward the former and punish the latter according to their own works. God's government of moral agents never will destroy their agency; and therefore he will not only ascribe their own actions to themselves, but treat them according to their own free, voluntary conduct. It is just as important that God should ascribe the actions of men to themselves, as that he should finally judge the world in righteousness. And now it is easy to see,

2. The importance of ascribing men's actions to God as well as to themselves. He is really concerned in all their actions; and it is as important that his agency should be brought into view, as that theirs should be brought into view. For his character can no more be known without ascribing his agency to himself, than their characters can be known without ascribing their agency to themselves. God was as really concerned in the whole affair of selling Joseph into Egypt, as his brethren were. And his agency was of as much importance as theirs; nay, it was of much greater importance; for he proposed the end, appointed the agents, and guided every step they took to bring it to pass. Joseph's brethren had a cruel and malignant design in their conduct, but God had a most wise and benevolent design in it. This Joseph believed, and told his brethren so. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Had the whole story of this important event been related without once mentioning the agency of God in it, his astonishing wisdom and goodness in preserving Joseph, his father's family and the whole nation of Egypt, would have been kept out of sight; and of consequence he would have been robbed of the glory which was due to his name. In this view it was highly important that the actions of Joseph's brethren should be ascribed to the agency and overruling providence of God. And it is equally important that all the actions of both saints and sinners should be ascribed to the divine agency. Hence we find that the inspired writers every where represent all those graces and virtues by which saints are formed for

heaven, to the power and operation of the Deity upon their hearts. The apostle, speaking of himself and other christians who were desirous of and prepared for heaven, says, "Now he that wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." On the other hand, we find the exercises and conduct of sinners, by which they are formed for destruction, ascribed to the operation of God upon their hearts. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" As the glory of God could not have been displayed in sending Joseph into Egypt to save millions from impending destruction, unless the conduct of Joseph's brethren had been ascribed to God, so the glory of God in saving the elect and destroying the non-elect, can never be displayed, without ascribing the actions of all mankind to him who works in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In a word, it is of as much importance that the actions of men should be ascribed both to God and to themselves, as it is that the greatest good of the universe should be promoted. For this ultimately depends upon a clear and full display of the divine as well as human agency in the conduct of mankind, from the beginning to the end of time.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. In the view of this subject, we learn when it is proper to ascribe the actions of men to themselves, and when it is proper to ascribe them to God. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the inspired writers sometimes ascribe the actions of men to themselves, without bringing the divine agency into view, and sometimes they ascribe them to God, without bringing human agency into view; and there is a perfect propriety in these two different modes of representing human actions. Whenever men are required or forbidden to act, and whenever they are approved or condemned for acting, there is a propriety in ascribing their actions to themselves, without any reference to the divine efficiency. It is their own free, voluntary agency, which alone constitutes their virtue or vice, and which renders them worthy of either praise or blame. Though they always act under a divine influence, yet that influ-

ence neither increases their virtue nor diminishes their guilt, and of consequence ought never to be brought into view when they are to be praised or blamed for their conduct. But when the power, wisdom, goodness, or sovereignty of God in governing their views and actions are to be displayed, then it is proper to mention his and only his agency in the case. Accordingly we find the sacred writers always observe strict propriety in ascribing the actions of men either to themselves or to the Deity. This is exemplified in the history of Joseph's brethren. When their guilt is to be brought into view and condemned, *they* are said to sell Joseph into Egypt; but when the wisdom and goodness of God are to be displayed, *he*, and not *they*, is said to send him thither. So when Pharaoh is to be blamed, he is said to harden his own heart; but when the divine sovereignty is to be acknowledged, God is said to harden his heart. And so again, when the guilt of the crucifiers of Christ is mentioned, they are said to perpetrate the horrid deed with wicked hands; but when the benevolent design of the Deity is exhibited, the hand, as well as the counsel of God, is said to be concerned in bringing about the event. If we carry this idea in our minds, we can easily expound some passages of scripture which have been often misunderstood and misapplied. Among others, the following texts have given great trouble to expositors. Psalm cxix. 36: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Psalm cxli. 4: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity." Isaiah, lxiii. 17: "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" Romans, vi. 17: "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin." James, i. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And chapter iii. 14, 15, 16, 17: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." In these passages it is denied that

the bad actions of men may be ascribed to God, and equally denied on the other side that the good actions of men may be ascribed to themselves; but yet it is asserted in these same passages that the agency of God is concerned in disposing men both to good and evil, or in their good and bad actions. Here is no difficulty, if we only allow that there is a propriety sometimes in ascribing the actions of men wholly to themselves, and sometimes in ascribing their actions wholly to God. It is proper sometimes to ascribe men's good actions wholly to themselves, and sometimes equally proper to ascribe their bad actions wholly to themselves. While on the other hand, it is sometimes proper to ascribe men's good actions wholly to God, and sometimes equally proper to ascribe their bad actions wholly to him. This single idea will solve a seeming difficulty which runs through the Bible.

2. Since the scripture ascribes all the actions of men to God as well as to themselves, we may justly conclude that the divine agency is as much concerned in their bad as in their good actions. Many are disposed to make a distinction here, and to ascribe only the good actions of men to the divine agency, while they ascribe their bad ones to the divine permission. But there appears no ground for this distinction in scripture or reason. Men are no more capable of acting independently of God in one instance than in another. If they need any kind or degree of divine agency in doing good, they need precisely the same kind and degree of divine agency in doing evil. This is the dictate of reason; and the scripture says the same. It is God who worketh in men both to will and to do in all cases without exception. He wrought equally in the minds of those who sold, and in the minds of those who bought Joseph. He wrought as effectually in the minds of Joseph's brethren, when they sold him, as when they repented and besought his mercy. He not only prepared these persons to act, but made them act. He not only exhibited motives of action before their minds, but disposed their minds to comply with the motives exhibited. But there was no possible way in which he could dispose them to act right or wrong, but only by producing right or wrong volitions in their hearts. And if he produced their bad as well as good volitions, then his agency was concerned in precisely the same manner in their wrong as in their right actions. It is upon this ground, and only upon this ground, that all the actions of men, whether good or evil, may properly be ascribed to God. His agency in making them act, necessarily connects his agency and theirs together, and lays a solid foundation for ascribing their actions either to him or to them, or to both, as the design of the speaker or writer may require.

3. If the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as to themselves, then it is easy to form a just and full view of divine providence. If God is actually concerned in all human actions, it necessarily follows that he constantly and absolutely governs the moral as well as the natural world. All denominations of christians are agreed in the belief that God governs the sun and moon, the earth and all material objects, in all their motions, revolutions and effects, by his constant and powerful agency. But with respect to the moral world, many imagine that God only upholds moral agents in existence, and preserves their active powers, without exerting any influence upon their wills, which move them to act in every instance according to his own pleasure. If it were possible, however, for moral agents to act without any divine influence upon their wills, as some suppose, it is easy to perceive that their actions would be solely their own, and could not in any sense be ascribed to God, nor considered as under his providential control. But since mind cannot act, any more than matter can move, without a divine agency, it is absurd to suppose that men can be left to the freedom of their own will, to act, or not to act, independently of divine influence. There must be therefore the exercise of divine agency in every human action, without which, it is impossible to conceive that God should govern moral agents, and make mankind act in perfect conformity to his own designs. This is the only scriptural representation of divine providence; and according to this representation, it is easy to see that all actions, as well as all events, may be traced to the overruling hand of God. Pious men of old had this just and full view of divine providence. Joseph ascribed the whole series of actions and events, from the time he had his extraordinary dreams to the time he made himself known to his brethren, to the hand of God. Job ascribed all the evil as well as all the good he experienced, to divine providence, though he knew that Satan and his agents were concerned in his afflictions. All the good and all the evil which takes place in this world, takes place under the providence of God, and therefore his hand is to be seen and acknowledged in every event, without a single exception. None can have a full and just idea of the universality and perfection of divine providence, without considering God as governing all moral agents in all their moral conduct, by a powerful and irresistible influence. It is a gross absurdity to suppose that the providence of God is more extensive than his agency, or that he ever governs men without exerting a positive influence over them.

4. If it be true that all the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as to themselves, then it is proper to submit to

God under all the evils which he brings upon us by the agency of created beings. Whenever they act, they act under his influence, and according to his providential will. If they do us evil, he is the primary cause of the evil; and his hand, and his heart, and his counsel, are to be seen and submissively acknowledged. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" No evil can come to a city, a family, or person, without the divine agency. God sometimes brings natural evils upon mankind by his own hand alone, and sometimes by the hands of his creatures. All will allow that we ought to submit to God under the afflictions which come immediately from his holy and righteous hand. But it is no less evident that we ought to submit, when he makes use of the most malignant agents to punish or purify us. Agreeably to this, the apostle Peter observes: "Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Whether we are afflicted by Satan, or by the instrumentality of wicked men, we have the same reason for submission as when we are more immediately corrected by God himself; because neither Satan, nor wicked men can do us any harm, but under the agency of him who governs their hearts and hands. When Job was so severely afflicted by Satan and the servants of Satan, he ascribed his afflictions to God, and cordially submitted to his will, who had made use of those instruments to chastise him. When David was insulted and abused by Shimei, he said the Lord had bidden him, and therefore submitted to God without the least murmur or complaint. If we always thus viewed the hand of God in all the evils which we receive from our fellow creatures, we should feel the propriety of silence and submission under all the natural evils and calamities which fall upon us.

5. If the actions of men may be ascribed to God as well as to themselves, then God will be glorified by all their conduct. Whether they have a good or bad intention in acting, God has always a good design in causing them to act in the manner they do. Joseph had a good design in visiting his brethren, and in conducting with propriety under both the smiles and frowns of providence; and God had a good design in guiding the motions of his heart and the actions of his life. So that God will be for ever glorified by the life and conduct of Joseph. Joseph's brethren had a malevolent intention in abusing him

and finally selling him into Egypt; but God had a good design in both foretelling and guiding their wicked actions. So that God will be glorified by all their conduct. And since God equally governs all the actions of all men, whether good or bad, he must be glorified by the conduct of the whole human race. All the wrath, all the malice, all the revenge, all the injustice, and all the selfishness, as well as all the benevolence of mankind, must finally praise him, or serve to display the beauty and glory of his character. His intention and his agency, which always go before theirs, and which is always wise and benevolent, turns all their conduct to his own glory. At the great and last day, when all human hearts shall be unfolded, and all human conduct displayed, the hand and counsel of God will appear in all, and shine the brighter by every act of disobedience and rebellion in his creatures. Their bad intentions will be a foil, to display the glory of God to the best advantage.

6. If the actions of men may be ascribed both to God and to themselves, then we may see the duty and nature of true repentance. When men freely and voluntarily do evil, their conduct is their own, and they are the criminal agents. They freely and actively violate their obligations to obedience. This is in its own nature sinful, and for this they ought to repent. Their criminality does not consist in the cause of their evil desires, affections, designs and volitions, but in their evil desires, affections, designs and volitions themselves. These are all as much their own, and as really criminal, as if God had had no concern, influence, or agency in their production; and they are under as real and strong obligation to repent, as if they had acted independently of every being in the universe. But since all their sinful conduct may be ascribed to God, who ordained it for his own glory, and whose agency was concerned in it, they have no reason to be sorry that any evil action or event took place. This is so far from being implied in true repentance, that it is altogether inconsistent with it. So Joseph supposed in the case of his brethren. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: For God did send me before you to preserve life." God had a good design in governing the sinful conduct of Joseph's brethren; and when they saw this good design happily accomplished, they could have no ground to regret the taking place of that series of actions and events by which it was brought about. They could not have been sorry for this, without being sorry for God's conduct, and for the accomplishment of his holy and benevolent design; which would have been totally inconsistent with godly sorrow for their own sins. God was not sorry that their sinful conduct had taken place, and they had no more rea-

son to be sorry on that account. When they really repented as we know they did, they loathed and abhorred themselves for sin itself, and not for its taking place under the divine government. This is the very language of their hearts, when they were brought to repentance. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." They saw the intrinsic turpitude, malignity and criminality of their intentions and designs, and with self reproach, self loathing and self condemnation, acknowledged their just desert of punishment from the hand of God. This was genuine repentance and godly sorrow, and essentially different from a sorrow that their sins had taken place, and that God's design had been accomplished. The apostle Paul makes this distinction between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world, in his description of true repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." The sorrow of the world is the sorrow that arises from an event's taking place; and this worketh death, because there is no remedy for it. If we ought to be sorry, all things considered, that any event has taken place, then it is utterly impossible that either God, or his holy creatures, can be completely blessed. But if there be no cause to be sorry, all things considered, that any action or event has taken place, then sinners may loathe and abhor their sins, as God loathes and abhors them, and yet be completely happy. Godly sorrow, or true repentance, is not only consistent with, but absolutely necessary to, the highest happiness of sinners. While they condemn and loathe their own conduct, they may rejoice for ever in the conduct of God towards themselves and all other dependent beings.

Finally, if it be true that the actions of men may be properly ascribed both to God and to themselves; then it is of great importance for mankind to believe and acknowledge this truth. It runs through the whole Bible, and stands inseparably connected with all God's conduct towards his creatures, and with all their conduct towards him and one another. It is so far from casting any darkness or obscurity over the scriptures, that it throws peculiar light upon all the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and upon all the works of God and man in the dispensations of providence and grace. While we see the consistency of human and divine agency in all the actions of men, we can read the sacred volume with great edification and delight, and clearly discern the heart and hand of both God and man, in all the small as well as great events which take place in the world.

But without seeing and believing this truth, not only the world, but the Bible, must appear to us full of darkness and mystery, which it will be out of our power to penetrate or remove. It is therefore of as much importance to see and believe the connection and consistency of divine agency in human actions, as it is to see God, ourselves and all intelligent beings in a clear and true light, and to know how we ought to feel and conduct towards them. It is only in the view of this truth, that all holy creatures will be the most completely happy, and all unholy ones the most completely miserable, through the boundless ages of eternity. It highly behooves every person to look into, and understand this most interesting subject. It will be no excuse to say that he cannot understand it, while he neglects to examine it with a fixed, deliberate and impartial attention. Those who do not know and love it in this world, must know and hate it for ever; which will be the consummation of their future misery.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE AGENCY OF GOD UNIVERSAL.

I, THE Lord, do all these things. — ISAIAH, xlv. 7.

IN this chapter God foretells the character and conduct of Cyrus, whom he designed to employ as the principal instrument of restoring his people from their long captivity in Babylon to their native country. And to give more weight and solemnity to his prediction, he asserts, in the strongest terms, his own divinity, unity, supremacy and universal agency. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings; to open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden treasures of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, who call thee by name, am the God of Israel; for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." This is the connection of the text, which, in this connection, contains a truth that it equally concerns all mankind to understand and believe. The truth is this: The agency of God is universal.

To set this important truth in as clear a light as I am able, I shall endeavor to show,

I. In what the agency of God consists; and,

II. That his agency is universal.

All who acknowledge the existence of God, are agreed that he brought this world out of nothing by his own proper agency. But they are not so well agreed in what his agency consists. The variety of opinions on this subject has been a source of many great and dangerous errors respecting the doctrines of the gospel. A misapprehension of divine agency has been the occasion of involving some important subjects in great darkness and obscurity. It is, therefore, much to be desired, that the agency of the first and supreme Cause should be exhibited in a clear and intelligible manner. There can be no agency where there is no choice or design. An agent is one who exerts his power to produce some effect. Accordingly God, to convince mankind of his great and powerful agency, mentions the great and important effects he has produced. He says he held the hand of Cyrus, subdued nations before him, loosed the loins of kings, opened before him the two leaved gates, brake in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. And after mentioning these great effects, he adds: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." That is, I produce all these great and marvellous effects of choice or design. Hence we may safely say that the agency of God consists in his will, his choice or volition;* and in nothing which is either the cause or consequence of his willing or choosing to produce any effect, or bring about any event. It is plain that his bare knowledge cannot produce any effect. Our knowledge of any thing present or to come has no tendency to produce any effect. And though God's knowledge be infinite or unlimited, yet his knowledge never did and never can produce any effect. His knowledge that he should create the world had no tendency to create it; and his knowledge of any future event never had the least tendency to bring it to pass. So that his agency does not in the least degree consist in his knowledge. Nor does his agency consist in his wisdom, which enables him to form the most extensive and perfect designs. His forming the great plan of creation, of providence and redemption, had no tendency to produce those great and glorious effects. That plan existed completely in his own mind before he took one

* The terms will, choice and volition, are generally used by Dr. Emmons as they are by President Edwards, in a general sense, including the affections, desires, &c., as well as the executive acts of the mind. — Ed.

step, or made one exertion to accomplish it. His wisdom in forming any design has no tendency to carry it into execution. So that his agency does not consist in his wisdom. Nor does his agency consist in his power, which is always prior to it. He had power to create the world before he created it. Power may exist without any exercise or exertion. We have power which we do not exercise. We have power to do a thousand things which we never do. Action and the power of action are very different. The agency of God, therefore, does not consist in his power to act, or in his omnipotence. Now if his agency does not consist in his knowledge, nor in his wisdom, nor in his omnipotence, nor in any of his natural perfections, the inference is plain that it must consist in his will, or choice, or volition, and in nothing else. None of his natural perfections can produce any effect without his willing it; and after he has willed it, his agency is no farther concerned in its production. His agency consists in nothing before his choice, nor after his choice, nor beside his choice. It does not consist in the cause of his choice, any more than in the effect of his choice. We can form as clear ideas of the agency of God as we can of his existence, or of any one of his natural attributes. And the clear idea we have of his natural attributes constrains us to believe that his agency cannot consist in any one, or all of them, but solely in his will, choice or volition. We cannot conceive that his acting is any thing but his willing or choosing to produce an effect. His willing or choosing a thing to exist, is all that he does in causing it to exist. This is the dictate of reason respecting the nature of divine agency, and reason in this case entirely harmonizes with scripture. Moses represents creation as produced merely by a divine volition. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." And David represents God as producing the world in precisely the same manner. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth." Thus it appears from both scripture and reason, that the divine agency consists in the divine will or choice, and not in the cause or consequence of the divine will or volition.

We may now safely proceed a step farther, and observe that God is a perfectly free agent. Voluntary agency is complete free agency. We cannot conceive of any agent's acting more freely than his acting of choice. So far as God acts voluntarily, he must of course act freely. But we have seen that he is perfectly voluntary in acting, and indeed that his whole agency consists in choice. Choice always implies a motive, or an object chosen. We cannot choose without choosing

something, and that something which we choose is the motive of choice; of consequence, we always act from motive, when we act of choice. This holds true with respect to the Deity. As he acts of choice, so he acts from motive; and as he acts from motive, so he acts freely. He is a free agent just so far as he is a voluntary agent; and as he is a perfectly voluntary agent, so he is a perfectly free agent. God was as free as he was voluntary in creating the world. This all the heavenly hosts solemnly and gratefully acknowledge. We read, "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created." God was perfectly free to create or not to create the world, and so his creating it was a perfectly free and voluntary act. He is also just as free and voluntary in upholding and governing the world as he was in creating it.

This leads us to observe still farther, that God is a moral, as well as a free and voluntary agent. There is a wide difference between merely free and voluntary agency, and moral agency. Any creature is a free agent that acts of choice in the view of motives. The animal creation are free agents, because they act of choice; but they are not moral agents, because they cannot distinguish between right and wrong, or moral good and moral evil. But God has the most perfect discernment of the difference between moral good and evil. He perfectly knows and loves moral good; and as perfectly knows and hates moral evil. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;" but sin, iniquity, and every species of moral evil, is the abominable thing which he hates. He has made mankind capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong; and he calls upon them to judge of the rectitude of his own conduct towards them. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" God always acts, not only voluntarily and freely, but benevolently. All his volitions are virtuous and holy. He always chooses to act perfectly right, or to do what is wisest and best to be done. It is morally impossible for him to have a selfish or sinful volition. "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." There is no more difficulty in forming clear and just conceptions of the free, voluntary and moral agency of God, than in forming clear and just conceptions of his power, wisdom and goodness. Nor is there any more difficulty in forming clear and just conceptions of his power, wisdom, goodness and agency, than in forming clear

and just conceptions of human power, wisdom, goodness and agency. Power in God is of the same nature as power in man. Wisdom in God is of the same nature as wisdom in man. Goodness in God is of the same nature as goodness in man. And free, voluntary, moral agency in God is of the same nature as free, voluntary, moral agency in man. If this be not true, we can form no right conceptions of our Creator, and can never know that he is a wise, powerful, benevolent and active being; for we derive all our ideas of God from our ideas of ourselves. To say therefore that God's agency is different in nature from our own, is as absurd as to say that his knowledge, his power, or his moral rectitude is different from our own. And to say this, is to say that we have not and cannot have any true knowledge of God. We may then rest satisfied that God is a perfectly free, voluntary, moral agent; and that his free, voluntary, moral agency solely consists in the mere exercise of his will. I have dwelt the longer on this point, because it is a point of great importance to be understood, in order to have just conceptions of God, who is the first, the greatest and best of beings, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. And now if we have properly explained the agency of God, we may as easily make it appear,

II. That his agency is universal. God claims to be the universal agent. "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." He here claims to be the supreme and universal agent in both the natural and moral world. And such universal agency is ascribed to him through the Bible. He is said to cause the sun to rise and the rain to fall. He is said to cause the regular succession of day and night, winter and summer, seed time and harvest. He is said to set up and overturn kingdoms and nations. He is said to turn the hearts of kings and of all men whithersoever he pleases. He is said to work in all men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. These and all other things are ascribed to God, by all the sacred writers. The truth of such representations of the universality of the divine agency may be illustrated and confirmed by various considerations. Among others I will mention the following.

1. God has made all things. He existed eternally, before any other being or object existed in infinite space. He once existed alone, and might have always existed alone, if he had pleased. It was owing to the pure benevolence of his heart, that he formed the great and glorious design of creation. And it was owing to his free, voluntary and almighty agency, that he brought the heavens and the earth, angels and men, out of

nothing into being. He created all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. He is the Creator of every object in the universe besides himself. Every thing that lives and moves and exists in the immensity of space, is a demonstration of his universal agency. Creation is exclusively a divine operation. No being but God could give existence to the smallest atom, or the meanest insect. Human agency can move and modify what is created, but cannot give existence to the least material or immaterial object. Though the works of creation are immensely great and numerous and various, yet they are not more extensive than the divine agency, which brought them out of nothing into existence. God founds his claim to universal agency upon his having actually made all things. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me." "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." As the first Cause of all things, he must necessarily be a universal agent.

2. This farther appears from his upholding all things. God did not and could not make any creature or object independent, and give it the power of self-preservation. The Creator of all things must of necessity be the supporter and preserver of all things. The same almighty agency which is necessary to give existence to any creature or object, is equally necessary to uphold that creature or object in existence every moment. Preservation is, strictly speaking, nothing less than continued creation. The first agent must be the supreme agent; that is, he must exercise a constant agency over all other agents. For in him they live, and move, and have their being. This some of the wisest heathens believed and taught. He that made angels agents must exercise a constant agency over them. He that made men agents must exercise a constant agency over them. To suppose that either angels or men can act independently of God, is to suppose that they themselves are gods. But the Deity cannot make a deity, any more than he can make a self-existent and eternal creature. This is totally inconsistent with the nature of creative power, which God illustrates in the instance of Cyrus. "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no god besides me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." God, who created Cyrus, exercised a constant agency over him, and girded, and guided, and preserved him through every period of his life. And this is equally true of all intelligent creatures,

from the highest to the lowest. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." He exerts his agency in producing all the free and voluntary exercises of every moral agent, as constantly and fully as in preserving and supporting his existence. It is as demonstrably certain that God exerts his agency in upholding all things, as that he exerted his agency in creating all things. For no other power but that which made the world, can uphold it in existence a single moment. The first agent, therefore, must be the constant and universal agent. I may add,

3. God must extend his agency to all created objects in the universe, because he has made all things for himself. As he was voluntary in making all things, so he must have had some supreme motive in creating all things; and that motive could have been no other than his own glory. He ought and did regard himself supremely in the work of creation. His infinite wisdom and goodness required him to propose a wise and good design in creating angels and men, and every other creature he has formed. He made nothing in vain. He created no superfluous objects. He brought no more, nor fewer creatures and objects into existence, than he saw necessary to answer his ultimate end in creation. None of these creatures and objects are capable of guiding their own motions, or directing their own actions, to promote the purposes for which they were made. It is therefore utterly impossible that God should make all these created natures and objects answer his own original design in creation, without exercising a constant and controlling agency over them. He has both a right and a power to do what he will with his own, and to govern them in the best manner to answer the purposes of his own glory. But we cannot conceive it to be possible even for God himself to do this, without exercising a constant powerful agency over all his creatures and all his works, in every part of his extensive dominions. Should any object in the material world, or any creature in the intellectual world, act or move in a manner different from that which he originally intended, it would mar his glory and injure the universe, which he is under indispensable moral obligation to prevent. If the divine agency be a moral agency, it must be a universal agency. To speak with reverence, God is morally obliged to extend his agency over all the creatures and objects he has brought into existence, without the least limitation or exception. He must form light and create darkness, make peace and create evil, when, and where, and to what degree, the good of the universe requires; because he is the owner and rightful sovereign of the universe. And we may be confident that the same motives which induced him to create

all things, will constantly dispose him to uphold and govern all things by his wise and almighty agency, so as to make them all subservient, in some way or other, to his eternal purpose; which he formed before the foundation of the world, and before he gave existence to angels, or men, or any other creature or object in the natural or moral world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If divine agency wholly consists in volition, then human agency must wholly consist in volition. Many maintain that moral agency in creatures does not consist in volition, but in the cause of volition. This is absurd, because it is placing free agency in something which is involuntary. How can a man act freely, when he does not act voluntarily? If a man should move without choosing to move, his motion would not be a free, moral action, worthy of praise or blame. We never feel ourselves to be praise or blame worthy, in any case in which we do not act freely and of choice. It appears from what has been said, that God's agency does not consist in his power, knowledge, or wisdom, or in any one of his natural attributes, but entirely in his choice or volition. His agency in creating the world wholly consisted in his free, voluntary, spontaneous exertion. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." His whole agency in the work of creation consists in his will, his choice, or volition. So human agency does not consist in reason, conscience, or any other intellectual faculty, but merely in volition, or choice. A power or capacity to act is not acting. Though mankind have power or capacity to act, yet they never act until they choose to act; and in their choosing to act, their free agency consists, and in nothing else. It does not consist in any thing either before or after their choosing to act. Many imagine that their free agency consists in a power to cause or originate their own voluntary exercises; but this would imply that they are independent of God, in whom they live, and move, and have their being; which is far from being true. God is the primary cause of every free, voluntary exercise in every human heart. But this is consistent with men's having free voluntary exercises, which is the essence of free agency. We cannot conceive of men's having more freedom to act, than of their having freedom to act voluntarily. A power to act without choosing to act, would be of no advantage to them, if they possessed it. But they do not possess such a power; neither does God himself possess such a power. God has not a power to act without a choice, or to act contrary to choice. He has a capacity to choose and refuse; and in

choosing and refusing, he acts with the highest possible freedom. And since his free agency wholly consists in choosing and refusing, we may safely conclude that human agency wholly consists in choosing and refusing, and can consist in nothing else. Free agency must be the same in all intelligent beings. If God can possess no higher moral freedom than freedom of choice, it is very certain that mankind cannot possess any higher moral freedom than freedom of choice. This freedom we know we possess, by our own experience; and therefore know what our free agency is, as well as we know what our reason or conscience is.

2. If the free moral agency of God consists in volition or choice, then there may be as many free moral agents as there are intelligent creatures in this, or any other world. It is often said that if God be a free, moral, universal agent, there can be but one free moral agent in the universe. But there is no ground to draw this inference from God's universal agency. He may act upon the minds of all his rational creatures, without infringing upon their free moral agency in the least degree. As his giving them existence does not imply that they do not exist, and as his giving them perception, reason and conscience does not imply that they have not perception, reason and conscience, so his giving them a heart, which consists in free, voluntary exercises, does not imply that they have not free, voluntary exercises, or perfect moral freedom. God's acting on their hearts and producing all their free, voluntary, moral exercises, is so far from preventing them from being moral agents, that it necessarily makes them moral agents. If his agency deprived them of their reason, and all their moral and intellectual faculties, it would indeed deprive them of moral agency; but so long as it leaves them in the full possession of all their moral and intellectual faculties, it leaves them in the full possession of their moral agency. To say that men cannot be free agents under the universal agency of God, is virtually to say that God cannot make free moral agents. Men are as much free, voluntary, moral agents, while dependent on God and under his universal agency, as if they were self existent, and independent of all other beings. Their dependence on God, and his controlling power over them, are perfectly consistent with their enjoying the same free moral agency that God himself enjoys. He enjoys no other free moral agency than what consists in his volitions; and they enjoy all the free moral agency that consists in their volitions. He is voluntary in acting, and so are they. The apostle accordingly represents men as acting freely and voluntarily under a divine operation on their hearts. He calls upon men to work out their own salvation, for it is God that

worketh in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Though God exercises a controlling influence over every intelligent creature in the universe, yet every intelligent creature is a free moral agent. It is extremely unreasonable and unscriptural for mankind to deny God's universal agency, or their own free moral agency. For reason, scripture and experience require them to believe both. Both are as certain as God's existence and their own.

3. If God be a universal agent, then to deny his universal agency is virtually to deny his existence, which amounts to perfect infidelity. God founds his claim to divinity upon his universal agency; and implicitly says that he should not be God, if he did not form the light and create darkness, make peace and create evil. This is strictly true. For if he be God, he is the Creator of all things; and if he be the Creator of all things, he must be the upholder, preserver and disposer of all things. If he be the free moral agent who brought all things into existence, he is morally obliged to exercise a universal agency in supporting and governing all things. If he be God, he must be perfectly wise and good; and if he is perfectly wise and good, he must exercise a universal and powerful agency over all his creatures and all his works, and dispose of them in the wisest and best manner possible. To deny his universal agency is to impeach both his wisdom and goodness, which is virtually denying his divinity, or his eternal power and Godhead. To deny his universal agency implies one of these two things, either that he cannot exercise a universal agency, or that he neglects to do it; but neither the one nor the other is consistent with his being what he claims to be, the only living and true God; and therefore the denial is either open infidelity, or impious blasphemy. I would not, however, be understood to assert that all who deny God's universal agency, mean to be infidels or blasphemers. But though they do not know that to deny God's universal agency is either infidelity or blasphemy, yet it ought to be known that it is so, by those who call it blasphemy to say that God does exercise a universal agency over all his intelligent creatures, whether holy or unholy. We often hear it said, that those who maintain and teach that God exercises a universal agency, and is concerned in the production of all the good and evil that takes place in any part of the universe, are guilty of blasphemy. But it is certainly very unjust and censorious to charge all who believe and maintain an important truth, which is plainly revealed and taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible, with blasphemy. It is difficult to mention a more important truth than the universal agency of God. It lies at the foundation of all religion, and deeply

affects the whole intelligent universe. For if he did not exercise a universal agency over all his creatures and works, he would not be worthy of the supreme love and entire confidence of any of his creatures. It argues profound ignorance, or bold presumption, to charge any one with blasphemy for maintaining or teaching the universal agency of God, which reflects the highest honor upon him.

4. If God exercises a universal agency over all his creatures and works, then we may confidently conclude that he is constantly carrying into execution all his original and eternal purposes, by every thing that takes place in every part of the universe. For such and only such events take place, as are brought about by his own wise and powerful agency. He perfectly knows his own designs, and the best means to accomplish them; and he has all means and second causes in his hand, which he will certainly employ to answer his own purposes. When he has occasion to form light, he will form light; when he has occasion to create darkness, he will create it; when he has occasion to make peace, he will make it; when he has occasion to create evil, he will create it; and he is constantly doing all these things according to the counsel of his own will, and for the accomplishment of his own purposes. He brings about one event after another, in that order and connection which will most directly and speedily answer his original design. He makes no mistakes nor retrograde movements, but constantly and irresistibly bows all hearts, and bends all events, in subserviency to his ultimate end in creation. God has created so little light and so little peace, and so much darkness and so much evil, that mankind have been ready to say, "the Lord hath forsaken the earth;" he hath neglected to govern the world; he hath moved things backward rather than forward; he has counteracted rather than promoted his own purposes. Such has been the language of some, and the thoughts of ten thousand more. But God's thoughts have been above their thoughts, and his ways above their ways. He has kept his eye and his heart upon his own designs, and exerted his universal and almighty agency in producing just so much light and darkness, so much peace and evil, as he saw necessary to accomplish them. He has never neglected to do what it was best for him to do, nor been slack in fulfilling his purposes and promises. Nor has he ever failed to make his creatures do what he saw necessary for them to do, in order to fulfil his purposes. Divine agency is not like human agency. Human agency is visible. Mankind see each other act. But the divine agency is invisible. They cannot see the hand of God which governs the world. He can work and none can let it. He can move those

who imagine that they move themselves. He can guide those who imagine that they guide themselves. He can make those answer his designs, who imagine that they are only answering their own. And he can defeat their purposes, while they imagine he is promoting them. It is therefore just as certain that God is constantly and irresistibly carrying into execution all his original and eternal purposes, by all the evil as well as the good that takes place, as that he is able and disposed to do all his pleasure.

5. If God exercises a universal agency upon the hearts of men, then he can form as many vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath as he decreed to form, in perfect consistency with their free agency. Divine agency and human agency are perfectly consistent. Divine agency consists in free, voluntary exercises; and human agency consists in free, voluntary exercises. God can make men act right freely, and act wrong freely. He can make them love and hate, choose and refuse; and consequently can mould and fashion their hearts just as he pleases, consistently with their perfect free agency. He has always been forming vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, from the beginning of the world to this day; and he is now exercising his powerful and irresistible agency upon the heart of every one of the human race, and producing either holy or unholy exercises in it. The vessels of mercy act freely in embracing the gospel; and the vessels of wrath act freely in rejecting it. He can make as many as he pleases embrace the gospel in the day of his power, in one place and another. All sinners are in his hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter; and he can turn the heart of one as easily as the heart of another, from sin to holiness, from enmity to love, and from opposition to entire submission. Though God is creating darkness rather than light, and evil rather than good, here and in ten thousand other places in the world, yet the time may not be far distant when he will form light and not darkness, make peace and not evil, here and over all the earth. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save as well as destroy. His purposes have not changed, nor will his promises fail. He will work and none shall let it. He will display the riches of his grace here and every where else, as fully and as fast as possible. He is turning and overturning things, in both the natural and moral world, as fast as possible, in favor of both Jews and Gentiles. He created darkness to prepare the way for light; and evil to prepare the way for peace. There is no ground for despondency under the universal agency and government of God. It becomes the people of God to rejoice that their God reigneth, and is exercising a universal agency to promote their good and

the good of the universe, as much and as fast as possible. Though God causes both darkness and evil, yet in him there is no evil nor darkness at all. In his light, his people may always see light; and in his government, his people may always see good, and enjoy peace. Let them only unite their hearts and hands in carrying into execution his wise and holy purposes, and they may rest satisfied and comforted that all things shall work together for their good.

6. If God is a universal agent, and operates upon the hearts of all his intelligent creatures, then he will infallibly counteract the designs, and disappoint the hopes, of all his enemies in every part of the universe. Though God gives all men full liberty to devise their own ways, yet he always directs their steps. Though his agency always controls their agency, yet it never destroys it. They are perfectly free, and they are conscious that they are perfectly free, notwithstanding his agency upon their hearts. Though his enemies freely and voluntarily form a thousand designs to frustrate his designs, yet he always can and does fulfil his own designs, and disappoints theirs. It is as vain as impious, for them to attempt to rise up against him, and endeavor to frustrate his wise and holy purposes. For the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. The enemies of God have often made the experiment and attempted to frustrate the counsel of God, but have always been disappointed. Pharaoh was disappointed. Esau was disappointed. Ahab was disappointed. Saul of Tarsus was disappointed. God will counteract the designs of all sinners at this day. However numerous and powerful and confident the enemies of God may be, he will defeat all their designs and exertions; and he will cause their folly and wickedness to manifest his wisdom and goodness. Their hands and their tongues and their hearts are constantly and entirely under the holy and sovereign agency of God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

SERMON XXIX.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE FORMATION OF MAN.

NAY but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? — ROM. ix. 20.

THE apostle, in the preceding verses, introduces the doctrine of personal election to eternal life in its full extent, as implying personal reprobation to eternal destruction. And he illustrates the doctrine, by two memorable cases, well known to the Jews. First, by the instance of Jacob and Esau. "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Next, by the instance of Pharaoh. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." To this the apostle anticipates an objection. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Instead of evading this objection, as some suppose he does, he gives a direct and full answer to it. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The apostle does not mean to say to the objector, you have no right to put a question to me which no man can answer; but he means to say there is no ground for the question, "Why doth he yet find fault?" any more than for the question, Why should not a creature find fault for being a creature? This is the plain sense of the text:

Men have no reason to complain of God for making them just such creatures as they are.

I shall first show that God has made them just such creatures as they are; and then that they have no reason to complain that he has made them what they are.

I. God has made men just what they are, in distinction from all living creatures below them, and from all rational creatures above them, in various respects. And,

1. In respect to their bodies. When God made the first man, he gave him just such a body as he pleased, and just such a body as he intended to give to all his numerous posterity. The human body we know is very different in size, in form, in strength, in activity and in sensibility, from the bodies of every species of the lower creation; and it is no less different from the light, ethereal, transparent and splendid vehicles with which angels are clothed. There is a corporeal and visible dignity in the appearance of mankind, which is superior to the corporeal appearance of any other creatures on earth; and perhaps but a very little inferior to the corporeal appearance of the angels of light. Christ now appears, and will always appear, in the form of man in heaven; and we can hardly suppose that his visible appearance will be less dignified than that of the highest angels. But notwithstanding the general uniformity in the corporeal appearance of mankind, by which they are distinguished from the higher and lower orders of creatures, there is a vast variety in the appearance of individuals by which they are distinguishable from one another. Among the immense millions of mankind, there are no two men exactly alike, in their size, their form, their complexion, their strength and activity. All this personal variety is owing to the design of our Creator. He has made the bodies of all men just as he pleased. And so he has,

2. Their intellectual powers and faculties. He has made as great a diversity in the intellectual talents of men, as in their corporeal properties. He has given to some men a more solid, and acute, and comprehensive understanding than to others. He has given a stronger and more retentive memory to some men than to others. He has given a livelier and more brilliant imagination to some men than to others. And he has given a more easy and flowing eloquence to some men than to others. Though the intellectual talents of mankind in general appear very nearly equal, yet there is a wide and discernible difference between the lowest and highest talents of some of the human race. God has diversified and distinguished mankind as much by their intellectual powers, as by their corporeal forms and features, and external circumstances. He has made them to differ in all these respects, just as much as he pleased. And he exercises the same sovereignty,

3. In forming their hearts, or moral exercises. We read that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." This image of God did not consist in Adam's corporeal form, nor in his intellectual faculties, but in his moral exercises. Adam had the same moral exercises before he sinned, that his posterity have after they are renewed. When they are renewed in the spirit of their mind, they are said to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." God creates the hearts of all men, as well as their rational powers. David asserts: "The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men." And he adds: "he fashioneth their hearts alike." God is said to take away the stony heart from sinners, and to give them a heart of flesh; and when he does this, they are said to become new creatures. In order to make men moral agents and accountable creatures, it is necessary that God should make their hearts, as well as their understandings. Whether their hearts consist in moral exercises, or in something that is the foundation of them, they must be created. When God created Adam, he created not only his body and his understanding, but his heart. And he has created all mankind in respect to their bodies, their understandings and hearts, just as he pleased, and just as they all actually exist. Or he has, as the apostle says, "Made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," in all the innumerable varieties which appear in their corporeal, intellectual and moral qualities. Whatever men find they actually are, they may be assured that God made them thus. I now proceed to show,

II. That they have no reason to complain that God has made them just such creatures as they are. This will appear, if we consider,

1. That God had an original and independent right to create them. He had just as good a right to create them, as not to create them, or any other creature, or object. And who will presume to deny that he had a right not to create the heavens and the earth; not to create the angels in heaven; not to create man upon the earth; not to create the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field, and every thing that has life and breath, and creeps upon the earth? He had a right not to bring these, or any other creatures and objects, out of nothing into being. He had a right to exist alone from eternity unto eternity, and never to exert his almighty power in producing any creature, or object, in any part of unbounded space. He had this original and independent right not to create, because his not creating could not infringe upon the rights of any other being in the universe. And for the very same reason, he had

an absolute independent right to create, because his creating could not infringe upon the right of any being not to be created; for no being had a right not to be created. God had a right to create angels, because his creating them could not infringe upon their rights, for they had no rights before they were created. They could neither choose nor refuse to be created; and God's creating them was neither agreeable nor disagreeable to their choice. And it is equally true that God had a right to create mankind, because his creating them could not infringe upon their rights; for they had no rights before they were created. They could neither choose nor refuse to be created; and God's creating them was neither agreeable nor disagreeable to their choice. The act of God in creating is the most sovereign act conceivable. It is impossible that he should create any being or object, without acting as a sovereign; and so far as he has a right to act as a sovereign, no being in the universe can have any reason to complain of his conduct. If he should now create a new material world, and create a new race of intelligent and accountable creatures to inhabit it, no being in that world, nor in heaven and earth, could have any reason to complain of his exercising his original and independent creative power. If it be true that God had an original and independent right to create mankind, and did create them without infringing upon their rights, then they certainly have no reason to complain that he has made them, or brought them, from nothing into being. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me?"

2. God had an original and absolute right to make mankind just such creatures as they are. He had precisely the same right to make them exactly as he has made them, as to make them at all. He had a sovereign right to make them inferior to the angels of heaven, and superior to all the irrational creatures on earth. He had a sovereign right to produce as great a uniformity and as great a variety among mankind themselves, as among the other inanimate objects in this lower world. He has made a great uniformity and a great variety in every species of trees that grow in the forest, and in every species of grain, grass, fruits and flowers, that grow out of the earth. And he has made a great uniformity and a great variety in every species of creatures that fly in the air, swim in the ocean, and walk and creep upon the earth. We every where observe a beautiful uniformity and a beautiful variety in every species of sensitive natures and inanimate objects; but we cannot discover any two individuals which compose these numerous species, which are exactly alike. Now all will allow that God had a sovereign right to produce such a uniformity and variety in all these spe-

cies of animate and inanimate objects. But if he had a sovereign right to create all these species of animate and inanimate objects in all respects just as he has actually created them, why had he not the same sovereign right to produce a similar uniformity and variety among the human species, and to make mankind in all respects just as he has actually made them? Where is the man that has any reason to reply against God, and say unto him who made him, why hast thou made me thus? Who has any reason to complain that God has not made him as beautiful as Absalom, as strong as Sampson, as wise as Solomon, as meek as Moses, as patient as Job, or as honest as Samuel? Who has a right to complain that God has not given him a better understanding, or a better memory, or a better heart? Who has a right to complain that God has not made him different in any respect whatever? No man in the world has any just ground to complain that God has given him natural talents or moral qualities which he has not given to another, nor to complain that God has not given him natural talents or moral qualities which he has given to another. No man has a right to complain that God has made him to resemble another, nor to complain that he has made him to differ from another. God has as good a right to create two men alike, as to create them at all, or to create two men different as to create them at all. God had an original and independent right to create mankind, and to create them just as he has created them; and therefore it is absolutely impossible that they should ever find any just ground to complain, either that he has made them, or that he has made them just what they are.

3. God had a wise and good design in forming mankind in all respects exactly as he has formed them. His wisdom and goodness were concerned, not only in making them, but in making them precisely what they are, in distinction from the higher order of intelligences, and the lower order of irrational creatures. And in order to answer his design in making them, it was as necessary that he should form them different from one another, as to form them different from all other creatures he had formed. He made all men for himself, and designed to employ them in a vast variety of services; and in order to fit them for the various services in which he meant to employ them, he made them to differ one from another in their bodily and mental powers. He did not consult any man how he should form him, but consulted his own glory in forming every individual of the human race. He forms every man for use, just as the potter forms every vessel for use, or just as he forms the members of the body for use. These are the very similitudes which the inspired writers employ to illustrate the wisdom

and goodness of God in making mankind different from one another, and to illustrate the unreasonableness and absurdity of their complaining of God for making them so differently as he has actually made them. The prophet Isaiah demands, "Shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?" And again he asks, "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" It seems as though the apostle borrowed his language and argument in the text and context from the language and argument of the prophet. He asks, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" And in another place, the apostle illustrates this same subject by the variety and symmetry in the frame of the human body. "The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? and if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him." "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." By these similitudes, the prophet and the apostle illustrate the right God had to make men different, and his wisdom and goodness in making them different. They say that as the potter has a wise and good design in forming his vessels differently for different uses, so God has a wise and good design in forming men differently for different uses. And as the wise and good design of the potter justifies him in forming his vessels differently for different uses, so the wise and good design of God justifies him in forming mankind differently for different useful purposes. And the consequence, which both the prophet and apostle draw from this conclusive mode of reasoning, is, that no man has any reason to complain that God has made him thus. There is no more ground to complain of God for making mankind just as he has made them, than to complain of his infinite wisdom and goodness.

4. If mankind have any reason to complain of God, it must be owing not to his creating them what they are, but to his treating them improperly after he has created them. His cre-

ating them was neither an act of justice nor injustice towards them, but an act of mere sovereignty. He had a sovereign right to create them free moral agents, capable of doing right or wrong; and his creating them such free moral agents was neither an act of justice nor injustice, and could not possibly be an injury to them. But if he had required them to do any thing wrong, or forbidden their doing any thing right, or had punished them, or even threatened to punish them, for doing right, or not doing wrong, he would have treated them improperly, unjustly and injuriously, and given them just ground of complaint. Though God complains of mankind for complaining of him in making them what they are, yet he allows them to complain of him, if he treats them improperly, or unjustly, after he has made them free moral agents. He says to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard." He appeals to the same people to judge of the rectitude of his conduct towards them. "Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" And again he says, "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." God condescends to hold himself responsible for all his treatment of mankind after he has made them. He allows them to complain, if they can discover any thing improper or unjust in the precepts, prohibitions, or threatenings he has given them; or if they can discover any thing improper or unjust in the dispensations of his providence, or grace. This is altogether reasonable. For if the Judge of all the earth should not do right in a single instance, in his treatment of mankind, all the inhabitants of the earth would have just ground to complain of his conduct. It may be said with reverence, that God is under stronger moral obligation to treat mankind right after he has made them free, moral agents, than they are to treat him right. And as he has just ground to complain of them, if they do not treat him right, so they have just ground to complain of him, if he do not treat them right. But God was under no manner of obligation to mankind, with respect to their creation. He had a sovereign right to create them, or not to create them; and when he created them, to make them of a higher or lower order of intelligent creatures. Though Job might have humbly expostulated with God and said, "Show me, wherefore thou contendest with me;" yet he had no right to ask, "Why hast thou made me

thus?" Though Jeremiah might humbly say, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments; wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" still he had no right to ask, why God made him and them what they were. It is one thing for God to create moral agents, and another, to govern them. In creating them, he acts as an independent sovereign, who is under no moral obligation to them; but in governing them, he acts under moral obligation to treat them with propriety and justice. This distinction between creation and providence, demonstrates that it is both naturally and morally impossible that God should injure mankind in the least degree, by making them what they are; because he was under no obligation at all, either to make them, or not to make them, just as he pleased. Mankind have no more reason to complain of God for making them what they are, than to complain of him for making angels what they are, or making all the species of the lower creation what they are.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God makes men what they are, free, voluntary, moral agents, then they are always dependent on him in all their free, voluntary actions. They can no more act independently of God, than they can exist independently of him. In him they live and move, as well as have their being. The preparations of their heart and the answer of their tongue is from the Lord. He works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is not possible, in the nature of things, that he should make them independent of himself. He cannot put them out of his hand without putting them out of existence; and they can no more put themselves out of his hand, than they can put themselves out of existence. They cannot originate a single thought, affection, or volition, independently of a divine influence upon their minds. They are always under a moral necessity of acting just as they do act. "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps." Since men are the creatures of God, they are necessarily his dependent creatures, who cannot act only as they are acted upon by a divine controlling influence. To assert that men are in any respect independent, is virtually to assert that they are not the creatures of God. Dependence goes into the very idea of a creature; so that to say a creature is independent of his Creator, is a contradiction in terms. It is therefore universally allowed that men are in some measure dependent upon God, their Maker. But many deny that men are, in all respects and

altogether, dependent upon God. This however is really as absurd, as to deny that men are in any measure dependent upon him in whom they live, and move, and have their being.

2. If God has made men just such creatures as they are, then they know that he has made them capable of acting freely and voluntarily under a moral necessity. They know by their own consciousness, that they act freely and voluntarily in all they do, in the view of motives. And they know by reason, that they are dependent upon a divine influence to make them act freely and voluntarily in the view of motives, and that this divine influence lays them under a moral necessity of acting just as they do act. But yet many, contrary to reason and common sense, insist upon it that they cannot act freely and voluntarily, if they act under the influence of moral necessity. This it seems was the opinion of some in the apostle's day, who objected against the doctrine he taught concerning God's softening and hardening the hearts of whom he pleased. "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" This was as much as to say, if we are always under the influence of God in all our actions, and cannot resist and overcome his influence, then we are under a moral necessity of acting just as we do in all cases; and if this be true, then we cannot act freely or voluntarily, nor do any thing which is worthy of praise or blame. Why then does God find fault for our acting under his influence, which he knows we cannot resist nor control? This objection against man's free agency, thus placed in the strongest light, the apostle professes to answer and remove. But in answering it, he does not pretend to deny the premises, but only the consequence which the objector draws from them. He allows that God does influence men to act just as they do, and that they cannot resist nor overcome his influence, which lays them under a necessity of acting; and yet he asserts that God may justly find fault, and condemn and punish them, if they act wrong. And the reason he assigns is, that they are the creatures of God, whom he has made; though not independent, which was impossible, yet capable of acting freely and voluntarily under his irresistible influence. And if any man denies this, he denies that he is a creature, or that God has made him what he is, and what he knows he is, a free, voluntary, moral agent. Hear the apostle state the objection and give his answer in his own words: "The scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou will say then

unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The apostle here puts it to the objector to answer his own objection. He implicitly says to him, "You grant that God does have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. You grant that no man can resist his hardening influence. And you grant that God does find fault with those who disobey his will. Now if there be any difficulty in this case, it belongs to you rather than to me to remove it. I have only taught facts which you do not pretend to deny. But you draw an inference from the facts I have stated, which you insinuate is an insuperable difficulty. You ask why God should find fault with men for any thing they do under his irresistible influence; insinuating that they cannot act freely and voluntarily under a divine irresistible influence. But this inference does not follow from the premises granted, but is contrary to two plain well-known facts. One fact is, that God has made men. The other fact is, that he has made them capable of acting freely and voluntarily under his irresistible influence. Their accountability, therefore, arises not from their being made, but from their being made what they are, and what they know they are, free, rational, voluntary, moral agents. They intuitively know that they are worthy of praise or blame, for all their free voluntary actions, though God works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. To deny, therefore, that they are not worthy of praise or blame, for their free, voluntary actions under a divine influence or moral necessity, is implicitly to deny that God has made them, and made them what they know they are, and what they know he had a power and right to make them; that is, free, voluntary, moral, accountable agents. This is extremely unreasonable, unscriptural and criminal.

3. If men have no right nor reason to complain of God for making them what they are, and what he was pleased to make them, then they have no reason to complain that he determined from eternity to make them what he has made them, and what he will make them through every period of their existence. He has certainly a right to determine beforehand to do that which he has a right to do afterwards. As he had a right to make

men just what he pleased, at first, so he had a right to determine to make them what he pleased at first. And as he had a right to make them what he pleased as long as they should exist, so he had a right to determine what he would make them for ever. As he had a right to make Adam what he was before he sinned and when he sinned, so he had a right to determine from eternity to make him what he was before he sinned and when he sinned. And he had the same right to determine from eternity what he would make his posterity when they come into the world, while they live in the world, and as long as they exist. As he had a right to make men different from one another in respect to their intellectual faculties and moral qualities, so he had a right to determine to make them different from one another through the whole period of their existence. Every objection that can be made against the eternal purposes of God, lies with equal weight against the conduct of God in making men what he does make them, and what he has an original and sovereign right to make them. And for any one to object against God's doing what he has an independent right to do, is extremely presumptuous and inexcusable.

4. If men have no reason to complain of God for making them what they know they are, then they are all by nature totally depraved. For they are all naturally disposed to complain that God has made them thus. They complain of this, more than of any thing that God does in his providence, or says in his word. Indeed, all their objections against God may be traced to the doctrine of man's absolute dependence and free agency. Mankind almost universally unite in calling this an unreasonable and absurd doctrine, though it is plainly revealed in the Bible from beginning to end. This objection arises not from reason or experience, but from a total aversion to being absolutely in the hands of God as the clay is in the hands of the potter. They would all fain flee out of his hand. This is not the natural disposition of one, or two, or a few of mankind, but the natural disposition of all. They are all therefore naturally enemies to God. They either say that there is no such God as the Bible represents, or if there is, they inwardly say that he shall not reign over them. They are displeased that he has made them as he has, and that he has made them the offspring of Adam, and caused them to share in the natural and moral evils of the fall. They say often that they had rather never existed than to exist the depraved offspring of Adam who ruined them. This language and feeling demonstrate that they have naturally a carnal mind which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It is the spirit of the first transgressor, and the greatest enemy to God.

5. If men have no reason to complain of God for making them what they are; then whenever they seriously contend with him on this account, they will be constrained to justify God and condemn themselves. Whenever God thoroughly awakens sinners to attend to their absolute dependence upon him, their hearts never fail to rise, to object, to murmur and complain. But thousands have been convinced of the absurdity and criminality of their complaints. And God can always convince them, if he pleases. For they are rational, as well as moral agents, and capable of feeling the weight and authority of divine truth. When any truth is clearly and fully set before the reason and conscience of any person, it is impossible for him to disbelieve it, whether he loves or hates it. His conviction of truth does not depend merely upon his heart. His reason and conscience may be convinced, while his heart hates the conviction. All sinners are constantly liable to be convinced that all their complaints against God, for making and governing them as he does, are groundless and criminal. They may be convinced to-day or to-morrow; and they certainly will be sooner or later.

6. If it be true that men have no reason to complain of God for making them just such as he pleases, then it is their indispensable duty to be willing to be in the forming hand of God to all eternity. And they ought never to feel or express a desire to get out of his hand. God's absolute sovereignty calls for their immediate and unconditional submission. And let them say or do what they will, they will remain his enemies until they do actually and cordially submit themselves entirely and for ever into his holy and sovereign hands.

SERMON XXX.

PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

WHEREFORE if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? — MATT. vi. 30.

OUR Saviour as often addressed his disciples as others, in his public as well as his private discourses. He lost no opportunities of instructing and preparing them for the great and difficult, and dangerous work in which he was about to employ them. He meant to send them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, without arms, without purse, without scrip, to preach the gospel in the face of a frowning world. And to prepare them for such a dependent and defenceless state, he taught them to place an unshaken dependence upon the care and protection of divine providence. "Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught *them*," as well as the multitudes. And among other duties, he clearly and beautifully illustrated the duty and safety of trusting not only in the universal, but in the particular providence of God, for the peculiar comfort and consolation of his disciples, when they should be thrown poor and defenceless on the world. "I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies

of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Here the argument is from the less to the greater. If God takes care of the lilies, and all the inanimate creation, will he not take care of the fowls and all the animal creation? And if he takes care of all the animate and inanimate creation, will he not take care of all the intelligent creation? If God exercises a general providence over the natural world, will he not exercise a particular providence over the natural world? And if he exercises a general and particular providence over the natural world, will he not exercise a general and particular providence over the moral world? Christ appeals to the common sense of all mankind, whether they have not reason to believe that God, who made the world and all that is in it, does exercise a particular, as well as a general providence over it; and whether they have not good ground to confide in his constant and particular care over them, and disposal of them.

The spirit of the text may be expressed in this general observation:

That God exercises a particular providence over every thing in this world. I shall,

I. Explain a particular providence; and,

II. Offer some considerations in favor of it.

I. I am to explain what we are to understand by a particular providence.

Many infidels, and some who do not choose to call themselves infidels, deny that God exercises a particular providence over the world. They acknowledge that he exercises a general providence over all the natural and moral creation, but deny that he governs individual creatures, persons, or events. They suppose that he governs the world by general laws, which he impressed upon it when he willed it into existence; which laws he will continue in force as long as it exists. These general laws, they suppose, leave room for what we call contingencies. They suppose all things roll on through a vast variety of contingent events, according to the first impressions of motion that were given to them by the first Mover, and under the direction of a universal providence. As to the tribes of lower animals, they are left under the direction of instinct; and as to men, God has given them the materials of natural and moral happiness in the natural and moral constitution of things. He has given them also faculties and powers necessary to collect and apply these materials, and carry on the work of their

own happiness. They suppose that God takes no care of men as individuals, but only as a species, or as large bodies and communities; that he takes no care of animals as individuals, but only as a species; and in a word, that he takes no other care of his creatures than to continue their species according to the first law of their creation. Indeed, they consider this world like a great machine, which God at first created and set in motion, and left to run on according to the general laws given it, without the continued agency and direction of the great Creator. This is what some call a general providence, and suppose to be the only one that God exercises over the world. But christians in general maintain the doctrine of a particular providence, by which they mean that God not only gives general laws for the government of the world, but that he gives energy to such laws and applies them to every individual creature, object, and event in the world; or that he takes care of every individual person among mankind, as well as of the whole human race collectively; that he takes care of every particular animal, as well as of every species of animals collectively; that he directs and controls the smallest, as well as the most important events that take place in the world; that he does not merely see all things as an unconcerned spectator, but by his invisible and almighty hand, guides and governs all his creatures and all their actions; and in a word, that he is the first and supreme Cause of all that lives, and moves, and exists, in this and every other world. I now proceed,

II. To offer some considerations in favor of such a particular providence as I have just described. Here it may be observed,

1. That it appears from the nature of providence that it must be particular. We cannot conceive of a general, without a particular providence. The very idea of providence supposes the preservation and government of the world. If God exercises any kind of care or concern over it, it must be in upholding all things in existence, and in directing the conduct of creatures and the events which respect their happiness or misery. And if this be the nature of providence, it must be particular, and extend to every individual creature, and every individual event. For we can no more conceive that one creature can uphold itself in existence than another. If one creature needs the divine support, then all creatures need it. And if all creatures need the divine support at one time, then they need it at all times. It involves an evident absurdity to suppose that any created object or created agent should be one moment independent of its creator for support and preservation; because independence is an incommunicable attribute of

the Deity, which he can no more give to any of his creatures, or to any of his works, than he can give them eternal and uncaused existence. Since then all created things are necessarily dependent, God's preserving providence must respect and support them all individually. The small dust of the balance as much needs the constant agency of divine providence to support its existence, as the whole material system. The drop of the bucket as constantly needs the supporting hand of God, as the whole collection of waters in the deep and mighty ocean. The smallest animal or insect as constantly needs the preserving power and agency of God, as all the species collectively. And every man in particular, must depend upon a divine and almighty influence to continue his existence, as much as the whole human race. The preserving providence of God, therefore, must of necessity be particular, and extend to every created being and object, without a single exception. And so must the governing providence of God. For if one creature needs to be under a divine direction, so does another. If one event needs to be under a divine direction, so does another. And if one secondary cause needs a divine influence to give it energy to produce its effects, so does another. In short, if there be any need of a divine providence to uphold this world, there is the same need of a divine providence to govern it. And if there be any need of a divine providence to uphold and govern it in general, there is the same need of a divine providence to govern every thing in it, in particular. Every argument in favor of a general providence, is equally pertinent and forcible to prove a particular providence.

2. The supreme and ultimate end of divine providence proves it to be particular. If God exercises any providence or government over the world, it is to answer some particular end, and the same no doubt for which he created it. This is the dictate of reason as well as scripture. Hence that ascription of praise to the Creator in the fourth chapter of Revelation: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." And the apostle says, that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." To this may be added the declaration of Solomon, that "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Now if God's last end in the creation of the world be his own glory, and if he aims at the same end in the exercise of providence, then his providence must be particular as well as universal, and be concerned in all created objects and events. If he means that the whole creation shall promote his glory, then he must exercise not only a universal, but a particular providence over the whole.

The whole is always made up of all its parts; and therefore, in order that the whole creation may promote his glory, he must govern and direct all the parts of it to his supreme and ultimate end. Accordingly we find that some great and important events have been connected with, and dependent on, those that appear without such a connection very small and trifling. What important events depended on Joseph's dreams! They finally proved the means of preserving the whole church of God. The dreams of Ahasuerus proved the occasion of searching the records, which occasioned Mordecai's advancement, Haman's overthrow, and the Jews' deliverance from a general massacre. The gaggling of geese once saved the city of Rome from destruction by the Gauls. Fabius, the Roman general, who by his wisdom and valor drove Hannibal, the greatest warrior then in the world, from the Roman empire, was suffocated by a single hair in a draught of milk. These facts show how necessary it is that God should exercise a particular as well as a universal providence over every creature, object and event in this world, in order to make all things promote his own glory, which was his supreme and ultimate end in the creation of all things.

3. The goodness of God requires him to exercise a particular providence over all his creatures. Every creature susceptible of pleasure or pain is a proper object of the divine benevolence. And as all the creatures of God are always open to his all comprehensive view, so he regards them all with equal attention and impartial affection. God is love; and he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. His goodness disposes him to pay attention to his whole great family, and take particular care of every individual. He stands in the same relation of Creator to all his rational and irrational, all his holy and unholy creatures. And though he does not feel the love of complacency towards them all, yet he feels the love of benevolence towards every individual, and desires to promote its happiness so far as the good of all permits. His perfect, impartial benevolence, therefore, requires him to exercise not only a general, but particular providence over the smallest, meanest and vilest creature and object in both the natural and moral world.

4. The scripture represents God as exercising a particular providence over every material and immaterial, rational and irrational creature and object that he has brought into being. It represents God as governing and controlling every part of the material creation. It says, he causeth the day-spring to know his place, and maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by their proper names. He hath his way in the winds and in

the storms, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He causes the thunders to lift up their voice, the lightnings to flash and strike, when and where and whom he pleases. He has the balancing of the clouds, and causes it to rain on one city and not on another. He giveth the snow like wool. He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels. Who can stand before his cold? He rules the raging of the sea, and sets bounds to the mighty ocean, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. He watereth the earth, and causes it to yield its increase. He covers the valleys with corn, and the fields with grass. He gives beauty to the lily, and fragrance to the rose. His providence governs all the inanimate and vegetable world. Nor does he exercise a less particular and influential providence over the animal creation. He gives courage to the horse, strength to the lion, wisdom to the hawk, and prudence to the ant. He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. But he takes a more tender and affectionate care of all mankind, each of whom he values more than the whole animal creation. He fixes the bounds of their habitation, and determines the number of their months. He keeps their eyes from tears, their feet from falling, and their souls from death. He governs all their thoughts, intentions, and actions. He gives them all things richly to enjoy. He takes as constant and particular care of every individual of the human race, as if he had but one person in the world to take care of. Such a wise, and powerful, and benevolent, and particular providence, does God exercise over all his creatures and all his works.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God exercises a particular providence over the world and all that is in it, then there can be no such thing as chance, or fate. The old heathen philosophers held the doctrine of fate, though they differed in their opinions of it. Some maintained that matter had a necessary and eternal existence, and never was created; and consequently they supposed that it was not in the power of any intelligent being to govern it so as to prevent either natural or moral evil. Of course they supposed that natural and moral evils were to be ascribed to chance or accident, independently of any supreme governor of the world. Another sect of philosophers supposed that Jupiter, the supreme deity, governed all things according to his own fixed and immutable decrees, which they called fixed fate, agreeably to the etymology of the word *fate*, which is derived from the obsolete Latin verb *for*, through its participle *fatus*, which means *spoken*.

They supposed that all things happened just as the supreme deity had determined and said that they should happen, notwithstanding the desires, the exertions, the hopes and fears, of all inferior and dependent creatures. Hence they supposed that all things happened by fatality, and that no event could be brought about or prevented by any human means. But if God, who made the world, governs it generally by the instrumentality of men and other subordinate agents, then there is no room for fate, or chance, or any contingent events. Though no denomination of christians profess to hold the doctrine of fate, or chance, yet they do profess to believe that ten thousand events are contingent, and come to pass independently of any divine decree, or divine agency. This opinion is totally inconsistent with the rational and scriptural doctrine of a universal and particular providence. God determined from eternity to make just such a world as this, and to govern it just as he does govern it, by a particular providence. He determined to leave no creature, no person, no object, and no event, to mere casualty or chance. As the world and all there is in it is always under his eye and in his hand, so he treats all creatures and all persons just as he originally intended, and brings about just such events, at just such times, and by just such means, as he originally intended. No contingent event ever takes place. Not a hair falls from the head, nor a sparrow falls to the ground, contrary to his design, or without his agency. It is owing to his particular providence that mankind enjoy so many, and no more favors; and it is owing to his particular providence that they suffer so many, and no more evils. No good can come to them, and no evil fall upon them, but only under the direction and influence of his holy, wise, powerful, and particular providence.

2. If God exercises a particular providence over the world and all that is in it, then he will certainly accomplish his supreme and ultimate end in all the works of creation. As he made all things for his own glory, so he will make all things in the universe promote his infinitely wise and eternal purpose. As he exercises a particular providence over all the material, animal and moral world, every object, every creature and every event, which he has brought and will bring into existence, will be, some way or other, instrumental of accomplishing his great and good designs; because there is nothing in the universe that can either designedly or undesignedly oppose, counteract or frustrate the operations of his providence. As he has made nothing in vain, so he governs nothing in vain. There is not one worthless or useless creature or object in the whole circle of creation. Though there are ten thousand creatures and

things which appear not worth creating, preserving or governing, in our view, this is not true in the view of God. He knows how to dispose of all created beings and objects so as to make every one of them serve some valuable and important purpose. This world, viewed as in the hand of providence, is a most beautiful, valuable and important world. And could we see the ultimate end to which God is moving all things, we should not be slow of heart to believe that he will finally accomplish all his designs; that all his works will praise him; that they will bring an immense revenue of glory to himself, and an immense revenue of holiness and happiness to his dutiful and obedient subjects. God, in governing this world for nearly six thousand years, has caused it to produce great and astonishing effects. How many millions of rational and immortal creatures has God already raised up here, to exist for ever in a future state; and how many millions more will he raise up here for the same important purpose! And all the objects with which men have been, and will be surrounded here, and all the scenes of light and darkness, prosperity and adversity, through which he has called them and will call them, have been and will be the means of forming their characters and preparing them for endless bliss or wo. While we live in this world, which is under the particular providence of God, we are living in a great, and good, and solemn world. Every creature, every object, and every event is preparing the way for the final consummation of all things, when we shall find that God has not made an angel, a man, a worm, or a mote, in vain, but all for his own glory.

3. The particular providence of God displays the perfections of his nature in the most grand and glorious light. His upholding, preserving, and governing all things, by his universal and particular providence, gives the most exalted views of his eternal power and Godhead. We measure the power of every agent by the nature, the number, and magnitude of the effects which he has produced, or is able to produce. We admire the power of Sampson, who, by one effort of his strength, overthrew the house, and destroyed the lives of so many idolatrous Philistines. But what were those effects, in comparison with the nature, variety and magnitude of the effects which God has every moment, for thousands of years, produced? He has upheld, preserved, and governed the heavens, and the earth, and all the innumerable creatures and objects which they contain. To uphold and preserve one individual creature or object, displays a power superior to the united power of all created beings. But the power of God appears unspeakably greater and more astonishing in upholding and preserving

every particle of dust in the earth, every drop of water in the ocean, every star in the firmament, and every creature in the universe. The number, variety, and magnitude of the effects which God, by his particular providence, has produced for ages, and will produce to all eternity, display his omnipotence in the most clear, amiable, and instructive light. His particular providence displays the immensity of his presence as well as the omnipotence of his power. He is always present, wherever he always acts. He is always acting in heaven, in earth, and in all places; his presence therefore fills heaven and earth, and all places at one and the same moment, through every period of duration. And what an exalted idea does this exhibit of the divine omnipresence! But God governs every created being and object, as well as upholds and preserves all things in existence. He governs every particle of matter, every motion of every living creature, and every action of every moral agent, in subserviency to one supreme and ultimate object, which is his own glory. And to superintend and overrule all things in such a manner, displays infinite knowledge and wisdom. Nor does he make a less visible and glorious display of his boundless benevolence, by the multitude of his favors, which he is continually bestowing upon both his innocent and guilty creatures. His creatures are innumerable, and the blessings which he bestows upon each are innumerable. It is the particularity of divine providence that gives the brightest display of the immensity of the divine presence, and the infinitude of the divine power, wisdom and goodness.

4. It appears from the particular providence of God, that the whole world are under indispensable obligations of gratitude to him for every favor they enjoy. Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. By his particular providence, he has preserved them, watched over them, and provided for them every blessing that they have ever enjoyed. In him they have lived, and moved, and had their being, and to his almighty hand and benevolent heart, they ought to ascribe the great and innumerable blessings which have fallen to their happy lot. In the exercise of his particular providence over the world, he has every moment exerted his almighty power, and infinite wisdom and goodness, to satisfy the desires of every rational and irrational creature. Such displays of divine power, wisdom and goodness, God has made before the whole world of mankind, which have laid every individual under the most endearing obligations of gratitude to their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. He has not left the heathen world without witness, in that he has done them good,

and given them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. He has given far brighter displays of his goodness before all the christian world; and to no part of the christian world, perhaps, has he displayed the riches of his goodness and mercy so marvellously, as to our rising nation. We have been a people emphatically saved of the Lord. We have been eminently the children of his care and providence. He has given us both temporal and spiritual, civil and religious favors, in vast variety and extraordinary profusion. And in addition to these national blessings, he has bestowed upon every individual more personal mercies than can be reckoned up. But, alas! instead of giving unto him the gratitude and praise which the riches of his goodness have merited and demanded, how have we abused them! His goodness, instead of leading us to repentance, has led us to impenitence, unbelief and rebellion. He has reason to complain of us as he did of Israel,—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. God has spared your lives, and loaded you with his benefits another year, and now calls for his just revenue of gratitude and praise. But this you cannot pay him without giving him the supreme affections of your hearts, and devoting your spared lives to his service. O consider in what a good world you have lived, in what a good land you have lived, under what a good providence you have lived, and under what pious parents many of you have lived. These great and singular favors vastly strengthen and increase your obligations to live pious and grateful lives. But if any of you, whether young or old, should refuse to give your hearts and your service to God, and continue barren and unfruitful; you have nothing better to anticipate than to be cut down and destroyed, and that, even before such an anniversary as this shall return. Be entreated to spend this Thanksgiving day gratefully and penitently; and if you do, you may hope for the continuance and increase of every temporal and spiritual blessing, that infinite wisdom and goodness shall see best to bestow. Will not he that clothes the lily and feeds the fowls, much more feed and clothe you, who confide in his providence, as long as you shall need these blessings in your way to heaven?

PART VIII.

ANGELS.

SERMONS XXXI.—XXXII.

SERMON XXXI.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF ANGELS IN THIS WORLD.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? — Hebrews, i. 4.

The time was, when angels frequently appeared in a visible form, and freely conversed with the children of men. Then, if a man said he had seen an angel, it was as readily believed as if he said he had seen any other stranger. But since angels have ceased to make their visible appearance among us, many are disposed to call in question not only their presence and agency, but even their existence. It seems necessary, therefore, to consult the scriptures upon the subject, and inquire what they say concerning these invisible beings, and their connection with the affairs of this world. The apostle is speaking, in the beginning of this chapter, of the superior dignity and glory of Christ in comparison with the angels. By thus exalting Christ above the angels, he demonstrates his divinity; especially when he represents them as servants not only to him, but to those whom he came into the world to save. And in this view he speaks of them in the text. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" It immediately follows, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" In speaking upon these words, I propose,

I. To describe angels; and,

II. To consider their employment in this world.

I. I am to describe angels.

These are often mentioned in scripture, and the principal

traits in their character are clearly delineated. And here I may observe,

1. That they are the highest order of created beings that we have any account of. They are represented, in respect to their existence, as prior and superior to men. They existed before our world existed. This God intimated to Job, in the humiliating questions which he put to him. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?—when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" David acknowledges angels to be superior to man, even in his primitive purity and dignity. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." And the apostle in one of his epistles represents the nature of angels as distinct from, and superior to, the nature of the seed of Abraham, and next in dignity to the Divine Redeemer.

2. Angels are beings of superior power and wisdom. They are called "*mighty* angels." They are said to excel in strength. One angel destroyed more than a hundred and eighty thousand men in one night in the camp of the Assyrians. David says, "Bless the Lord ye his angels, that excel in *strength*, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." And the wise woman of Tekoa, in her artful address to David, represents angels as possessed of the highest degrees of created wisdom. "My Lord," says she, "is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." The arm of an angel is stronger than the arm of Sampson; and the wisdom of an angel is superior to the wisdom of Solomon. Though angels may have made no advances in power, yet they have doubtless made great advances in knowledge. They have been attentively looking into the works and ways of God for nearly six thousand years, and with their superior capacities must have greatly enlarged their knowledge of all that is to be known in heaven, in earth, and in all other parts of creation.

3. Angels are fixed in a state of permanent and superior holiness. They were once in a state of probation; but what was the test of their obedience, we are no where expressly informed. It is however very probable that what proved the occasion of Satan's falling, was the occasion of their establishment in holiness. They are called the elect angels. And they made their calling and election sure, the same day that Satan and his legions apostatized and renounced their allegiance to their Maker. Hence it is very likely that they consented to

bow to the sceptre of Christ, and become servants to mankind, whom he had engaged to redeem, while Satan and his followers disdained such a low and servile employment. Ever since that memorable day, they have been confirmed in holiness, and for that reason called *holy* angels. They were originally formed in the moral image of God, and have retained that image by constant and persevering obedience to the divine commands. Nor is this all. For they have undoubtedly made as great and swift advances in holiness, as in knowledge. So that they as far surpass all other created beings in their moral as in their natural excellences.

4. Angels are not encumbered with such gross bodies as we have. The apostle calls them "ministering spirits," and God says, he makes "his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire." A spirit has not flesh and bones. And the apostle assures us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Angels are inhabitants of heaven, and consequently are not clothed with such gross material bodies as the human species are. But yet it may be a question, whether they are altogether incorporeal and entirely destitute of any material vehicle. They have certainly appeared in human form, and as clothed in bodies. Though these may be only temporary, yet it seems most consonant to the analogy of things to suppose that there is but one absolutely incorporeal spirit; and that all other intelligences are clothed in either terrestrial or celestial bodies. But celestial bodies may be no incumbrance to angels, either in respect to the ease and rapidity of their movements, or to the clearness of their perceptions, or to the perfection of their enjoyments. I may add,

5. That there are various grades or ranks of angels. Christ is said to have created angels of different grades. We are told, "By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." And Christ is said to be exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." In another place it is said, he is "on the right hand of God, angels and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him." And besides these several orders of the heavenly hosts, we read of one who is above all the rest, and who is called *the archangel*. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." It has been a question whether there be more than one archangel, and even whether there be one. Some suppose that Christ is always

meant when the archangel is mentioned; and some suppose there are seven archangels. But it is most reasonable to suppose there is one, and but one, archangel. Whether the distinction in the orders of angels arises from any disparity in their powers, or from any distinct offices which they discharge, it is not easy to determine. It is however most agreeable to that beautiful variety which is every where to be seen in the works of God, to suppose there is a real diversity in the intellectual powers of individual angels. One angel may differ from another, as one star differs from another in glory. And they may be appointed to different offices, according to the difference in their mental powers and capacities. But what their business in heaven is, besides praising and adoring their Creator, we are no where informed, and it is vain to conjecture. The scripture acquaints us only with their employment in this world; and we are now,

II. To consider what these employments are. Their general employment here on earth is, to promote the good of the church, or to carry into execution the work of redemption. This is plainly intimated in the text. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" These heirs of salvation are all those who shall be redeemed from among men, from the fall of Adam to the end of the world; or in other words, these are the true church of God, for whom the work of redemption was devised and shall be finally accomplished. To bring home these many sons of God to glory, the angels have been constantly employed ever since the first apostacy of the human race, and shall be continually employed until all the elect are gathered in and put in possession of endless felicity. But their particular employments have been different in different ages of the church, according to the different circumstances which have attended it. And here it may be observed,

1. Angels have been employed in bearing the messages of God to the church. This was probably one of their first employments after the fall of man. And from this employment it seems they took their name. Angel signifies a messenger, or one who is sent upon some particular business. The angels were formerly messengers to reveal the will and purposes of God to his people. This the apostle observes in the next chapter and next words after our text. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by *angels* was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began

to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" The word here said to be spoken by angels, most probably means the law given at mount Sinai, which we are told, "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." But besides being concerned in this first permanent revelation to the church, angels were frequently employed in bearing messages to particular persons, both before and after the coming of Christ. An angel was sent to bear a particular message to Abraham, commanding him to spare Isaac, after he had lifted his hand to give the fatal stroke. And two angels were sent again to Abraham, to reveal to him and to Lot the destruction of Sodom. An angel was sent to Manoah and his wife, to reveal the purpose of God respecting the birth and education of Samson. An angel was sent to Gideon with a message from God, directing him to lead the armies of Israel to war against their enemies. An angel was sent to Elijah, to direct him to prepare for the journey which he was commanded to take. An angel was sent to Zechariah the priest, to foretell the birth of John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, to foretell the birth of Christ. An angel was sent to forewarn Joseph of Herod's design to destroy the infant Saviour. An angel was sent to Cornelius, to bid him to send for Peter. An angel was sent to Paul, to foretell his deliverance and that of those who were shipwrecked with him. And an angel was sent to the apostle John, to deliver the divine messages which are contained in the book of Revelation. For about two thousand years angels were sent, from time to time, to bear the messages of God to men.

2. It was the business of angels to attend upon Christ, from the time he came into the world to the time he went out of it. They were devoted to his service, and he could, as he intimated, at any time call more than twelve legions of them to his aid. And it appears from his history, that the angels did attend him all the while he tabernacled in flesh. A multitude of angels announced his entrance into the world. Luke tells us that the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds, "and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. — And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." As soon as Christ was baptized, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; and at the end of this conflict, the devil having left him, "Behold,

angels came and ministered unto him." After he had celebrated the passover and instituted the sacrament, he went into the garden to meet his enemies. But before they came to apprehend him, he prayed, being in an agony, and sweat great drops of blood; and "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Though no mention is made by the evangelists, that angels attended him at his crucifixion, yet it seems reasonable to suppose that multitudes of them were actually present on that great and solemn occasion. And this supposition is corroborated by the words of the apostle: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, *seen of angels;*" that is, at the time of his crucifixion. While he lay in the tomb, he had a guard of angels, who appeared to Mary on the morning of his resurrection. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." And when he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, and had prepared every thing for his departure out of the world, he had a convoy of angels to escort him to heaven. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Such was the delightful employment of angels, to attend the divine Redeemer, from his birth to his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven.

3. Angels are employed as executioners of God's wrath, against his enemies and the enemies of the church. The prophet Zechariah was informed that angels are God's ministers, who are constantly patrolling the world, and executing the designs of providence. "Then said I, O my God, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord, that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still and is at rest." The angels who are appointed and sent forth to traverse the earth, are those who are concerned in protecting the church against

its numerous enemies. The angel that talked with Daniel gives this account of himself and of others: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for, from the first day thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." According to this representation, angels are concerned in great national affairs which affect the church. They undoubtedly have an invisible influence upon the counsels of princes and the fate of battles, and, in other cases, are ministers of good to the church, and of evil to its enemies. The scripture gives us many instances of this kind. The two angels sent to Sodom, were ministers of divine vengeance to that devoted city. For they told Lot, "We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." Angels were the destroyers of the first born in Egypt. So the Psalmist expressly declares in the seventy-eighth Psalm: "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath and indignation, by sending evil angels among them." It was an angel that executed the divine displeasure against David and his kingdom, for numbering the people. After he had slain seventy thousand men, he visibly appeared with his drawn sword over Jerusalem; but a merciful God commanded him to sheath it. In answer to the prayer of Hezekiah for the protection of the church, "The angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." And when Herod arrogated to himself divine honors, it is said, "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory." We have good reason to believe that though God does not now employ angels visibly, yet he does employ them invisibly in the government of the world. I observe once more,

4. It is the employment of angels to take particular care of good men. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" We may not pretend to point out all that angels do for particular saints: but yet the scripture clearly mentions some important services which they perform for the heirs of salvation.

1. They often protect them from danger. The angels were sent to deliver Lot from the destruction of Sodom. Angels were sent to protect Jacob from the violence of his brother. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host, and he called the name of the place Mahanaim." An angel was sent to deliver Peter from prison. While he was in prison, "Behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." Then the angel conducted him to the house of Mary the mother of John. "As Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel." They undoubtedly meant his guardian angel. These are instances of angels protecting saints on certain critical occasions. But we have reason to conclude that they are the constant guardians and protectors of good men. David repeatedly suggests this idea. In the thirty-fourth Psalm he says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Again he says in ninety-first Psalm, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." These passages represent angels as the constant guardians and protectors of the righteous.

2. They assist good men in their duties and devotions. They are represented as present in the assemblies of the saints. Two large cherubim were carved in the temple. "And within the oracle," we read, "were made two cherubim of olive tree, each ten cubits high." These emblems signified the presence of angels in the temple. Now if angels are present with good men in duty, they may have the power of assisting them in their devotions. It is as easy to conceive how they may assist them in their religious duties, as how Satan can disturb and obstruct them in their approaches to God. They may not only strengthen their bodies, as the angel strengthened the body of Daniel while fasting, and the body of Christ whilst in agony, but strengthen their minds, by suggesting proper thoughts and exhibiting to their view proper objects. By doing both, they may enliven their devotions in secret, in private and in public worship. And in a similar manner, they may assist them in the more common duties of life. I may add,

3. There is reason to believe that angels minister to saints in their dying moments. They not only accompany them through the busy and dangerous scenes of life, but still accom-

pany them in the solemn hour of death. This is strikingly expressed in the parable of Lazarus. "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." When all earthly friends have done their office to good men, then angels take the charge of them, and guide them safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death. It is a gloomy thought to thinking minds, that we must die alone as to our fellow mortals; but it is a consoling thought, that if we are friends of God, his holy angels shall take the charge of our souls, and guide them safely to the mansions of bliss. The doctrine of the ministry of angels is interesting to all men. However we may forget them in life and health, their presence and aid are very desirable when we come to exchange worlds.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since angels were created an order of beings superior to mankind, we have peculiar reason to admire the great and discriminating grace of God in providing salvation for fallen men, while he suffered fallen angels to perish without remedy. Lucifer and the rest of the apostate angels were, for aught we know, equal in greatness and goodness to Gabriel and the rest of the elect angels before their apostacy; and God could have provided salvation for them, as well as for the apostate Adam and his posterity. They were capable of suffering more by their apostacy, than Adam or any of his posterity were capable of suffering by their apostacy, if no salvation had been provided for them; and had salvation been provided for angels, they were capable of rising to higher degrees of holiness and happiness than Adam and his posterity were capable of attaining, to all eternity. It must, therefore, have been owing to the unsearchable riches of divine wisdom and divine grace, that God provided a Saviour for fallen men, and not for fallen angels. If he had regarded the mere misery of fallen angels and the mere misery of fallen men, he would have provided salvation for fallen angels rather than for fallen men. Or if he had regarded the mere happiness of fallen angels, and the mere happiness of fallen men, he would have provided salvation for fallen angels, rather than for fallen men. But he regarded his own glory and the highest good of the universe, more than the eternal misery and eternal happiness of both fallen angels and fallen men. This his infinite wisdom saw he could better promote by providing salvation for fallen men, than by providing salvation for fallen angels, or than by providing salvation for both fallen men and fallen angels. God had goodness enough to desire the salvation of both, and wisdom and power enough to provide

salvation for both. But in his manifold wisdom he saw that he could not promote his own glory and the highest good of the universe so much by saving fallen angels as by saving fallen men, or as by saving falling men, and not fallen angels. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh," for the salvation of fallen men, and not for fallen angels. The wisdom and grace of God in the work of man's redemption through the death and sufferings of the Son of God, surpass the comprehension of all created beings. Angels have been looking into it, are looking into it, and will for ever be looking into it, and gradually learning more and more of the manifold wisdom and grace of God displayed in it, and yet never be able fully to comprehend all the wisdom and grace which it displays. But mankind have the most reason to look into and admire the riches of divine wisdom and discriminating grace in providing salvation for them, rather than for fallen angels. And those who shall eventually be saved from everlasting sin and misery, and restored to everlasting holiness and happiness, will more sensibly and gratefully admire the astonishing wisdom and discriminating grace of God in providing salvation for them instead of fallen angels, than any other created beings in the universe. They will sing a song of praise that none of the angels of heaven can ever learn.

2. Since all the angels are employed in promoting the work of redemption, it must be an immensely great and important work. We may judge of the greatness and value of any work, by the means which are wisely used in carrying it on. No wise being will undertake a work which will not more than compensate for all the means to be employed for the accomplishment of it. God knew if he undertook the work of redemption, he must employ all the holy angels to complete it. Accordingly he has employed, and will continue to employ them in this great work, until he has finished it. They are the highest order of intelligent beings; they excel in power, wisdom, and goodness. They are industrious and faithful, and employ their mighty powers to the best advantage. They mispend no time and mistake no duty. They are extremely numerous. David says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." Daniel says, speaking of the Ancient of days, "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." And the apostle speaks of "an innumerable company of angels." All these are employed in the work of redemption. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" What a vast idea must this give us of the work of redemption, which requires so many great and

mighty agents to carry it on! Though the scripture gives us an account of the length and breadth and height of Solomon's temple, yet this account does not give us such a clear and striking idea of its great magnitude, as does the account we have of the many thousands of men that were seven years employed in preparing materials for that great building. So if we consider that God has employed ten thousand times ten thousand angels for nearly six thousand years, and may employ them more than a thousand years longer, in carrying on the work of redemption, it must give us vastly extensive and astonishing conceptions of the magnitude of that work, and of the immense good which will flow from it, not only to men, but to God, and to the intelligent creation.

3. Since God employs all the angels to minister for the benefit of saints, we may justly conclude that they are very precious in his sight. They are his children, his heirs, his jewels, and the richest treasure he has on earth. Notwithstanding all their moral imperfections, he sees a peculiar beauty, excellence, worth and importance in their character, which render them the objects of his peculiar complacency and delight. He sees his own moral image in every one of his children, and views them as growing in grace, and rising to the full stature of such perfect men as Noah, Job, and Daniel; as Moses and the prophets; as Peter, James and John; as the best men that have ever yet lived, and died, and joined the general assembly and church of the first born in heaven. If they were not greatly beloved of God, he never would have done so much as he has done, is doing, and has promised to do, for their good, both in this world and in the world to come. He has been employing from the beginning of the world, and will continue to employ to the end of time, all his angels, all his intelligent and unintelligent creatures, in every part of the universe, to prepare for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory and blessedness. This, the apostle tells christians, is their future and eternal portion. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." This is a higher testimony of God's love to all saints, than that which he gave to Daniel, when he sent an angel from heaven to tell him he was "greatly beloved." Though saints have always been lightly esteemed by the men of the world, and counted as the off-scouring of all things, and put to the most cruel tortures and death, yet they have always been, in God's view, the excellent of the earth, whom he has distinguished among all his intelligent creatures, and for whom he has done more than he ever has done, or ever will do, for Gabriel, or the highest angels in heaven.

4. Since God employs all his angels to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, there is no good ground to believe that the departed spirits of good men are ever present in this world, to take care of the pious friends whom they have left behind. Some are very fond of believing that the spirits of good men who are gone to heaven, visit this world and know the state and circumstances of their friends and relatives whom they have left behind, and are disposed and able to aid and comfort them under their trials, sufferings and sorrows. The only passage of scripture that seems to favor this opinion is the first verse in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, where the apostle says, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." By this great cloud of witnesses, we are to understand the examples rather than the spirits of the departed patriarchs. It is the appropriate business of angels, rather than that of departed spirits, to be with and take care of those who shall be heirs of salvation, while they live here on earth. Christians in general, perhaps, would be more pleased to be compassed about with the spirits of their departed friends, than with angelic spirits; and this probably led them to construe the text which has been mentioned, in favor of an agreeable opinion. But this is rather a popish opinion, which has led many, who call themselves christians, to pray to departed saints. They must suppose that their departed saints are somehow present in this world, and acquainted with their situation, or it would be extremely stupid and absurd to pray to them for any aid, comfort, sympathy, or support. Christians ought to be satisfied that God has appointed angels to watch over, guard and assist them in their perilous journey through life and through death, until they reach the kingdom of heaven, where all dangers and all sorrows shall cease.

5. Since angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, we may justly conclude that there is a great change in the circumstances of sinners, as well as in their character, when they become saints. Before their conversion, they walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Only evil angels attend, guide and deceive them, while they continue in the state of nature under the influence of a carnal mind, and are willing servants of the great enemy of God and man. But when they turn from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, and become the children of God, they are delivered from the

power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ, and committed to the care of holy angels. Though saints are not entirely out of the reach of all danger from the world, the man of the world and the god of the world, yet they are out of the reach of the *fatal* influence of any created objects. Satan may molest them, as he did Job and Peter, but he cannot destroy them. God has told them for their comfort, He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. Satan is undoubtedly very loath that any of his subjects should be taken out of his kingdom and translated into the kingdom of Christ. This may account for the trials which young converts often experience. After they have received light and comfort and hope, they are often thrown into darkness, distress and despondency. The great deceiver can suggest doubts and fears, to break their peace, obstruct their religious course, and prevent them for a time, and even a long time, from doing honor to God and to religion, by a public profession of their faith and obedience. It deeply concerns them to beware of his devices, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and to put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, and quench all his fiery darts. This is the duty of not only young converts, but of old converts, who have long been led captive by the delusions of the arch deceiver. Are there not some such dilatory converts, who are injuring God, injuring religion, and injuring their own souls and the souls of others, by their negligence?

6. Since angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation, they must be fully acquainted with this world, and with the circumstances, characters and conduct of mankind in general. The greatest travellers and navigators, for the time being, are not half so well acquainted with the world and the inhabitants of the world, as the angels are, who are very numerous, very intelligent, and very attentive observers of all that they see and hear while traversing Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Though every individual angel may not take the circuit of the whole world, yet some or other of them are continually making their excursions through all the nations and regions of the earth. When the prophet Zechariah inquired of his conductor who those were that he had seen in vision, the angel that talked with him said he would inform him. "These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." What great discoveries must the angels make, while they are ministering to the heirs

of salvation! They must be acquainted with every good man on earth, and with every bad man. It is as necessary that they should be acquainted with the wicked as with the righteous, in order to guard the righteous against the wicked. They must visit all the cities, all the courts, all the armies and all the navies in the four quarters of the globe, and all other places and persons. And what discoveries must such intelligent and invisible spirits make, respecting the characters and conduct of this corrupt and degenerate world! They know God, they know heaven, they know hell, they know what God and Christ have done to save sinners, they know how sinners feel and conduct while upon trial for eternity, and while saints are ripening for future and endless felicity. How then must they feel, while they see the earth sitting still and at rest! No wonder there is more joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. As there are multitudes of them constantly here, they always know whenever a sinner repenteth, and is committed to their charge. It seems as though the ministering angels could not endure to discharge their office in this world, where they are constrained to witness so many dreadful scenes and objects; but they have eyes to see God in all, which fills them with raptures of admiration and joy, and causes them to cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory."

7. Are all the angels ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Then christians have no ground to fear in appearing on the Lord's side, and in performing every duty he has enjoined upon them. Though they are surrounded by enemies, they are equally surrounded by friends. Seeing they are compassed about with so great a cloud of angelic guards and witnesses, they may run with patience and courage the race set before them, amidst a frowning world. By an eye of faith they may see that they are as safe as Elisha was, when surrounded by the Syrian army in the city of Dothan. When Elisha's servant saw that the city was surrounded by a large army of horses and chariots, he cried out, "Alas! my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." If christians would believe and realize what God has told us, that he has sent forth his angels to be ministering spirits to them, to guard and guide them through their dreary and perilous pilgrimage, it would afford them great animation, courage and support, when they

are ready to despond, as the Israelites were, while passing through the dangers of the wilderness to their promised inheritance. They were afraid of the giants; but the mighty angels, who are the guardians and protectors of the saints, are far superior to any human giants, or invisible malignant spirits that may attempt to molest them. Those that are for them are more and mightier than those that be against them.

8. Since angels are such great and amiable beings as they have been represented, saints have a bright prospect, not only through life, but through death and through a boundless eternity. Their holy guardians will not forsake them through life, nor in the hour of death, but be with them after they leave the body, and conduct them to the world of light. And when they arrive there, they shall be like their holy conductors, the angels of God in heaven, in spirit and in body. Their bodies will be celestial or spiritual, like those of the angels, and their spirits will be perfectly pure and holy, like the pure spirits who have never had the least stain of sin. But this is not all. They shall be with them as well as like them for ever. As soon as they arrive at the new Jerusalem, they shall be united "to an innumerable company of angels." What warm and sincere gratitude must they always feel and express to those pure and exalted spirits, who condescended to watch over them, guide and guard them, when they were weak, ignorant, ungrateful, disobedient creatures. This cordial union between saints and angels will lay a foundation for their everlasting communion in all the holiness and happiness of heaven. To what an amazing height must their increasing holiness and happiness rise, through the interminable ages of eternity! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Now are they the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what they shall be, but we know that they shall be as holy and happy as their immortal spirits can be made.

9. This subject shows the sinful and miserable state of all incorrigible sinners, both in time and eternity. They have no holy angels to guide and guard them in this world; but they are under the power and influence of the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. They possess his spirit, and are enemies to God and all righteousness. They are constantly growing in sin and guilt, by all the light they have, and by all the mercies they enjoy, and by all the evils they suffer. They are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. The same evil spirits that attend them in life, will attend them at death, and drag their unwilling souls down to the chambers of eternal death. There they will be

for ever separated from God, from Christ, from the Holy Spirit, from holy angels, and holy men, and fall under their everlasting odium and displeasure. The Lord Jesus Christ, who died for them and offered salvation to them, will be their final Judge. And he has plainly told them how he will treat them at the last great, tremendous day of decision. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

SERMON XXXII.

THE SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNT OF THE DEVIL OUGHT TO BE BELIEVED.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. — 1 Peter, v. 8.

It is generally unwise to despise our enemies, because it prevents that vigilance which is necessary to defeat their evil designs. We often suffer more from those whom we contemn, than from those whom we fear. And perhaps mankind in general receive much greater injuries from their common enemy, whose power and malice they vainly deride, than from all their other enemies put together. Some are ready to doubt the existence of their adversary the devil, and consider him merely as a creature of the imagination; while others who believe his existence, commonly speak of him in the most familiar terms of reproach and contempt. But if he does really exist, and possess all that malevolence which is ascribed to him in the text, then he is certainly much more to be feared than despised. And since all men are more or less exposed to his destructive influence, it concerns them to form just apprehensions of his power and disposition to deceive and destroy them. It is proposed, therefore, in the following discourse, to give the scriptural account of the devil, and make it appear that we ought to believe that account.

I. Let us consider the scriptural account of the devil. This common enemy of mankind is more frequently mentioned in the Bible than any other particular person or agent, except the man Christ Jesus. He is called by a great variety of appellations. More than fifty times he is called the devil. More than

forty times he is called Satan. And he is very often designated by several other names, such as the accuser of the brethren, Apollyon, angel of the bottomless pit, prince of darkness, prince of devils, and the god of this world. Nor do the sacred writers merely mention his names, but fully describe his origin, his character and his conduct.

1. They represent him as an apostate angel. The scripture clearly reveals the apostacy of angels. The apostle Peter says, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And the apostle Jude gives a similar representation. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Satan, the head and leader of these apostates, originally belonged to a high and holy order of beings. But what his first offence was, we are not expressly told in his history. Some, however, have conjectured that his first sin consisted in refusing to obey Christ as mediator, and to minister to those who were to be heirs of salvation. And this idea seems to be suggested by several texts of scripture. Christ speaking of the devil in the eighth chapter of John says, "He abode not in the truth;" that is, he was not steadfast in obedience to him who was the way, the truth, and the life. And this disobedient temper he might manifest, when the Father said concerning the Son, "Let all the angels of God worship him." If, on that occasion, Satan did refuse to bow to the Mediator, it seems that his first sin must have been pride, which appears to be intimated in the apostle's words to Timothy. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is certain, however, that Satan once belonged to the highest order of created beings, and was, perhaps, the highest of that order. But by pride or some other offence, he apostatized from God, and led others to apostatize from him; for which he was doomed, with his followers, to a state of everlasting darkness and despair. But notwithstanding his loss of holiness and happiness, he still retains that superior power and intelligence with which he was originally created.

2. The scripture represents the devil as an invisible agent in this world. He is said to be a spirit, which denotes his invisibility. He is likewise represented as taking possession of the minds of men, and invisibly governing their thoughts and actions. But though he is naturally invisible to human eyes, yet he is capable, as well as the angels of light, of assuming a material vehicle, and of becoming visible to mankind. It seems he appeared to Adam and Eve in a visible form. But

we are not to suppose that God ever permits him to assume a bodily shape, unless it be on some peculiar occasion, to answer some special purpose of providence. It is true, he is represented in the text as a roaring lion; but this is to be understood figuratively. As an angel he is a spirit, and as a spirit he is naturally invisible, and, in his common intercourse with mankind, acts in an invisible manner; though he may occasionally put on a human or some other visible appearance.

3. The scripture represents the devil as the head of all the apostate angels. We are not informed how many of the heavenly hosts apostatized from God; but there is reason to believe that the number was great. When our Lord asked an unclean spirit his name, he replied, "My name is legion, for we are many." This account agrees with what the apostle says concerning the various ranks of fallen angels. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Among these various orders of apostate spirits, he who is emphatically called *the devil*, holds the highest. This is frequently intimated in scripture. When our Saviour cast a devil out of a dumb man, the Pharisees said, "He casteth out devils through the *prince* of the devils." And they said on another occasion, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." A similar remark was made by those who saw Christ cast out a devil that was dumb. They said, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." But he knowing their thoughts said unto them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation." "If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" Here Christ seems to confirm the common opinion among the Jews, that the devil is a chief or a prince, who reigns supreme in his own kingdom.

4. The scripture represents the devil as being conversant in this world, and exerting his power and influence here. The author of the book of Job says, "When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them." And when the Lord asked him whence he came, he answered, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." The apostle gives the same representation of him in the text. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." When Christ saw him coming to tempt him, he said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He also predicted the descent of the Holy Ghost, who should restrain and condemn Satan. "When

he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The devil has always been roaming through this world, and as the prince of the power of the air, produced winds, and storms, and other natural evils, to afflict mankind and carry on his malignant opposition to Christ and the interests of his kingdom. He has already spread misery and destruction far and wide; and he means, if possible, to ruin the human race. Nor does he act alone, but causes all his subjects to coöperate in all his malevolent purposes. Were all these apostate spirits only visible, they would appear more terrible than so many ravening wolves. For,

5. The scripture represents the devil, and consequently his subjects, as perfectly malevolent. This is the character given of him in the text. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." He is called an evil spirit, a foul spirit, an unclean spirit, a liar, a murderer, a tormentor, a destroyer. Yea, he is represented as the perfection of malignity. When Christ would describe sinners in the blackest colors, he compares them with this impure spirit. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And when the apostle would represent the bitterest passions of human nature in the most odious light, he calls them "earthly, sensual, *devilish*." God's conduct towards Satan, and towards all other beings, has imbittered his mind, and filled his selfish heart with the highest degree of envy, malice and revenge.

6. The scripture represents this enemy of all righteousness, as having access to the minds of men, and as possessing a power of tempting their hearts and leading them into all manner of moral evil. We are told that he tempted our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit; that he led the posterity of Noah to forget and forsake God; that he provoked David to number Israel; that he seduced many of the people of God into idolatry; that he tempted Christ in the wilderness; that he put it into the heart of Judas to betray him; that he filled the heart of Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost. He is called "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." He is said "to blind the minds of them that believe not." And it is predicted that he shall, in time to come, "go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." Hence God repeatedly and solemnly warns men to guard themselves against his wiles and temptations. Timothy is divinely directed to instruct such as oppose the gospel, "that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Paul exhorts himself and his christian

brethren to exercise mutual forgiveness: "Lest," says he, "Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." To the Ephesians he says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The apostle James also warns christians against the assaults of Satan. "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The duty and importance of such caution and resistance, the apostle Peter solemnly urges in the text. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." All these warnings and admonitions necessarily suppose that the devil has access to the minds of men, and continually employs all his power and subtilty to seduce and destroy them. I proceed to show,

II. That we ought to believe this account of the devil. It is a just and scriptural account. Nothing fabulous or fictitious has been mentioned. It appears from the whole current of scripture that the devil was originally an angel of light; that he retains his angelic nature and high rank among the apostate spirits; and that he is invisibly present in this world, where he has access to the minds of men, and employs every artifice to destroy them. That this scriptural account of the devil is worthy of belief, will appear from the following considerations:

1. It is God's account, whose knowledge and veracity are unquestionable. He was as able to give us the history of the devil, as the history of Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or any other person whom he has recorded in his word. He knew Satan from the beginning of his existence, and was able to give a true account of his primitive state, of his first apostacy, and of his conduct towards Adam and all his posterity to the end of time. He has not, indeed, revealed all that he might have revealed concerning this first apostate; but what he has revealed must be infallibly true, and demands universal belief.

2. There is the same ground to believe the scriptural account of the devil, as there is to believe the scriptural account of the angels who kept their first estate. His history and theirs come from the same author, and are extremely similar. Are they represented as spirits? so is he. Are they represented as superior to men? so is he. Are they represented as invisible? so is he. Are they represented as having intercourse with this

world? so is he. Are they represented as promoting the cause of Christ? he is represented as opposing it. But here it is worthy of remark, that God has given a more full and particular history of the devil and his angels, than he has of the principalities and powers above. In some respects, therefore, his history is worthy of more attention and regard than theirs. But many profess to believe their existence and agency, who doubt the existence and agency of Satan. This is highly absurd. If we ought to believe what God says concerning the angels of light, we ought, by no means, to call in question what he says concerning our adversary the devil.

3. The history of this destroyer is altogether credible, because it is completely interwoven with the history of the Saviour. The first account of the devil stands immediately connected with the first account of Christ. The sacred historian first relates the agency of the devil in the seduction and ruin of man, and then introduces the Mediator, who should destroy the works of the devil by restoring man to the divine favor. At the same time, it is foretold that there should be a constant contest between Satan and Christ, until the latter should finish the work of redemption. And according to the history of the devil, he has been continually opposing Christ and his cause in the world; and he will persist in his opposition until the work of redemption is completed, and the final sentence is passed upon the impenitent at the last day: "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus the history of the devil is interwoven with the scriptural account of all the most important events which have taken place from the beginning of time, and which shall take place till time is no more. Indeed his history is inseparably connected with the whole history of the Bible, and cannot be rejected without destroying the credibility of all sacred history. If we must believe any thing recorded in the Bible, we certainly must believe the history of the devil, which stands upon the broad foundation of divine revelation in general; especially if we consider once more,

4. That there is nothing absurd in the scriptural account of the devil. We can form clear and distinct ideas of such a being as the devil is represented to be. We can conceive of God as an invisible spirit; we can conceive of angels as invisible spirits; and we can conceive of our own souls as invisible spirits. We can therefore as easily conceive of the spirituality and invisibility of Satan. Nor is it less easy to conceive of his perfect malignity. This is the very disposition of our world which lies in wickedness. But it is often said that there is something absurd and incredible in the account of the devil's

tempting mankind to sin. This part of his history, however, corroborates and establishes the whole. Why should the devil be once mentioned in the Bible, if he were only an idle spectator of human affairs? Or why should so many warnings and admonitions be given to mankind to avoid and resist his influence, if he had no power to lead them into temptation? But if, on the other hand, he is their grand adversary, who is continually seeking to seduce and destroy them, then there is a great propriety in their being so repeatedly and solemnly cautioned to resist his dangerous assaults.

But to come more directly to the point, I would observe that we often experience something as difficult to explain as the temptations of Satan. While our external senses are completely locked up in a dream, we can see persons, and converse with them, and distinguish their features and dress. This is something more than barely thinking of such persons at a distance while we are awake, and something extremely hard to account for. It is perhaps quite as easy to conceive how Satan should suggest thoughts to our minds without the aid of our external senses while we are awake, as to conceive how any agent should be able to make us see, and hear, and converse in our sleep. Whoever can give a clear, and rational account of dreaming, we doubt not can give as clear and rational an account of the power of Satan to suggest temptations to the human mind. But however mysterious it may be that Satan should have access to our minds, yet it seems to be confirmed by daily experience. Why is the chain of our thoughts so often and so suddenly broken? Why do new, unconnected, and unexpected thoughts so frequently rush into our minds? Why do thoughts which the mind abhors, and endeavors to banish for ever, so repeatedly and repeatedly recur? These things favor the account which the scripture gives of Satan's tempting power over us. And they afford all the evidence of it that we could expect to have from actual experience. We cannot suppose that the operations of an invisible agent should be sensibly perceived, but only the effects of his operations; and these are, perhaps, very generally and sensibly perceived. But whether we perceive the effects of Satan's agency upon our minds or not, or whether we can account for his producing such effects or not, there is nothing absurd or contrary to reason and experience, in the plain account which God has given us of his seducing influence. God is perfectly acquainted with all the powers of our malicious adversary, and all the avenues to our minds. If Satan can suggest thoughts to us, or paint objects on our imagination, God knows it; and we must believe that he never would have warned us to resist the devil, if

he had no power to tempt us to evil. In a word, we have no reason to doubt, but every reason to believe, the account which God has given us of the existence, character, and conduct of Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. What has been said in this discourse, may serve to expose some false notions which have been entertained and advanced, concerning the origin and operations of the devil. Some have supposed that he is not a created, but an uncreated and self existent spirit, who has always been opposing the designs and operations of the Creator and Governor of the world. They cannot account for the numerous natural and moral evils which so generally prevail, without the supposition of an eternal malevolent being, who is the first author of all the sin and misery in the universe. And they refer to several passages of scripture in support of this opinion. It is true, we read in the eighth of John, "He was a murderer from the beginning." And in the first epistle of the same apostle, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Again we are told that the devil is the *god* of this world, and that he sowed tares among the wheat, by which are meant wicked men. But none of these texts necessarily imply that the devil has an underived existence, or omnipotent power. His being a murderer, and sinning from the beginning, implies nothing more than his being the first sinner and the first tempter to sin. And his sowing tares among the wheat is to be understood figuratively, as denoting his agency in tempting men to wickedness in general, and to a false profession of religion in particular. This appears to be the true construction of the passages of scripture under consideration; and according to this construction, they serve to illustrate and confirm the scriptural account of the devil which has been given in this discourse.

Some who acknowledge the existence of Satan, seem to think he has little or no concern in leading men into moral evil. They say the native corruption of the human heart will account for all, or nearly all the sins which are committed, without any temptations of the devil. But it ought to be considered that a general propensity to sin will not lead any person to any particular sin, without a particular motive or temptation to that particular sin. There must always be some objective motive presented to the view of the mind, in order to excite or draw forth the native depravity of the heart. The

worst man on earth will neither curse nor swear, neither cheat nor lie, neither steal nor kill, without some particular motive or temptation to commit either of these gross immoralities. Satan knows, therefore, that he has no ground to expect any man will commit any particular sin which he desires he should commit, unless he suggests a particular motive or temptation to that particular sin. He tempted David to number Israel, because he supposed he would not number them unless he led him into that sin by a suitable temptation. He acted in that case, upon the same ground that wicked men act, when they tempt one another to sin. Though they know each other to be extremely corrupt, yet they think it is necessary to tempt, persuade, and seduce one another to particular acts of wickedness. There is, therefore, just as much occasion for Satan's tempting men to sin, as for their tempting one another. It is true, there may be much moral evil committed without his agency, since there are so many other objects and agents which may present temptation. But since he actually desires to destroy mankind, we may well suppose that he employs all his malice and subtilty to involve them in sin and ruin.

Still some may say the devil is not omnipresent, he cannot be every where at once, nor tempt more than one person at one time; and therefore it must be very seldom that he tempts the same person, and never, perhaps, the largest part of mankind. There would be some plausibility in this objection, were there but one evil spirit to tempt the children of disobedience. But it appears from what has been said, that Satan is at the head of myriads of impure spirits, who are united with him, and act under him, in tempting and deceiving the world; and he may employ as many millions in his service, as there are millions of men in this state of probation. If every heir of salvation has a good angel to attend him, as the scripture seems to intimate, why should it be thought absurd to suppose that there is an evil angel, who occasionally if not constantly attends every impenitent sinner on the face of the earth? There is a perfect consistency in all the scripture says, concerning the apostacy of the devil and his angels, their malignant nature, and destructive influence upon the minds of men; and whoever will fairly and candidly consider the subject, will find every shadow of objection entirely vanish. Those who indulge doubts and difficulties upon this point, "give place to the devil," who wishes to keep them in ignorance and unbelief of his devices, that he may lead them captive at his will.

2. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the denial of the existence and operations of the devil directly tends to total infidelity. There are many truths contained in

the Bible, which men may disbelieve, without entertaining the least doubt of the plenary inspiration of that sacred volume. But to deny the truth of what is so plainly and abundantly revealed, concerning the existence and agency of Satan, strikes at the root of divine revelation. The history of the devil is so interwoven with the facts which the scripture records, and with the doctrines which it teaches, that whoever denies the existence and agency of that great adversary, who is said to involve the world in sin and misery, must naturally and necessarily consider the gospel, or the whole scheme of redemption, as a cunningly devised fable. Accordingly we find that Deists, who are professed infidels, openly reject and ridicule the notion of the existence and temptations of Satan. And those who are leaning towards infidelity, such as Universalists and Socinians, call in question not only what the Bible teaches concerning the devil's tempting the hearts and possessing the minds of men, but also what it declares concerning the existence of evil spirits in general. Reason, observation, and experience unitedly testify, that those who deny the scriptural account of the devil, are taking large strides towards complete infidelity. It is, therefore, very alarming that such an anti-scriptural sentiment is so openly avowed and propagated, at the present day of error and delusion. There is just ground to fear that many unsanctified and unthinking persons will be entirely ruined, before they even suspect that they are in the path of the destroyer.

3. If the Bible gives a true description of the devil, then he undoubtedly does all in his power to make men infidels. He knows the gospel has a direct tendency to defeat all his malignant designs; and, unless he can prevent men from believing it, that he must inevitably fall before its powerful influence. Our Saviour says he felt this effect when the seventy apostles were sent forth to preach the gospel in his name. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." The devil has, from the beginning of the world to this day, endeavored to prevent mankind from believing the word of God. By this artifice he ruined our first parents. By this artifice he destroyed Ahab. By this artifice he attempted to deceive Christ himself, and defeat the design of his mediatorial work. As he is an acute and subtile reasoner, so he is capable of suggesting the most sophistical arguments against divine revelation. His enmity to the gospel naturally prompts him to employ this method to subvert it, whenever he sees any prospect of success. How often does he suggest doubts to the minds of both saints and sinners, respecting the inspiration of the scriptures!

How often does he help the promoters of infidelity to the most plausible and delusive arguments to pervert the doctrines and subvert the first principles of Christianity! His agency is often very visible in the writings and reasonings of infidels. At the present day, the enemies of the gospel appear to be under a more than common influence of the great deceiver. It seems to be his main object to spread infidelity through all the christian world, and his success is extremely great and alarming.

4. If the devil has such power and inclination to tempt and deceive mankind as the scripture represents, then we may learn why they so often go beyond their intentions and expectations in sinning. When they commit a sin once, they have no thought of committing it again; or when they indulge themselves in one sinful practice, they have no thought of going into another. They intend and expect to set bounds to their sinning. This is always the case with young sinners, and not uncommonly the case with declining and backsliding professors. But Satan knows the natural connection between the beginning and the continuance in sin, and between one course of sinning and another. When he has tempted them to begin iniquity, he knows he has them on his own ground and in his own power, and neglects no opportunity of leading them, step by step, into that path which he imagines will most infallibly prove their ruin. Though they may be at certain times alarmed at the progress they have made in sins of omission and commission, yet he can easily allay their fears, and push them on in their usual course of negligence and disobedience. How many has he led from lying to cheating, from cheating to stealing, and from stealing to murder! How many has he led from Arminianism to Arianism, from Arianism to Socinianism, from Socinianism to Deism, and from Deism to Atheism and total skepticism! And how many has he led in a more insensible way to ruin, by first tempting them to neglect prayer, next reading the Bible, next hearing the gospel preached, and finally the whole concern of their souls! It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to account for the high handed crimes, the absurd errors, and the general security and stupidity of mankind under the gospel, without the instrumentality of the devil, who always lies in wait to destroy them. But it is easy to see how they are carried beyond their intentions, resolutions and expectations in their sinful ways, through his subtile and powerful temptations. His seductive agency will account for the sins of Adam, Noah and Lot, Moses, David and Solomon, Ahithophel, Jeroboam and Judas, the idolatry of the heathen, and the degeneracy, delusion and infidelity of millions in the christian world.

Finally, this subject admonishes all persons of every age and character, to guard against the fatal influence of their common adversary the devil. His invisibility, subtilty and malignity, render him a most dangerous enemy. He has slain his thousands and ten thousands, and still walks about seeking whom he may devour. None, while they remain in this imperfect state, are beyond the reach of his fiery darts and evil suggestions. Though saints have been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, yet they are still exposed to the assaults of the devil, who wishes to molest, disturb and injure those whom he knows he cannot finally destroy. It highly concerns them to use every proper method to resist the devil, that he may flee from them.

In the first place, let them live in the habitual exercise of sobriety. "Be sober," is the divine direction to christians. While they maintain sobriety, the adversary knows they are guarded within against any temptation he can suggest. But when he sees them in a light and airy humor, he knows they lie open to his malignant influence, and will by no means fail to improve such a favorable opportunity of trying the strength of their graces, by holding up a temptation exactly suited to the present state of their minds. Whether the levity of christians arises from their natural disposition, or from the company they are called to keep, or from a particular and occasional relaxation of their minds, it always exposes them to the assaults of Satan, who knows when and where and to whom to present temptations. He is so well acquainted with mankind in general, and with particular persons, that he can pretty certainly determine when they are in a state of gravity or levity, and, of consequence, when he can attack them to the best advantage. This ought to excite the children of God to maintain a constant and habitual sobriety or self possession, that they may escape or repel the fiery darts of the wicked one.

In the next place it behooves them to live in the exercise of vigilance as well as sobriety. Hence says the apostle, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." A watchful enemy needs to be watched. Christians should realize at all times and in all places, that they are continually attended by a subtile and invisible foe, who is incessantly bent upon drawing them into his snares. Here they are extremely apt to fail, and to give Satan an advantage for doing them a great deal of mischief. It is for want of caution and vigilance against his influence, that they often suffer so much from him, without knowing whence the evil comes. They ascribe to other

causes, what is the effect of his malignant suggestions. How many doubts, and fears, and anxieties, and follies, and sins, might they escape, by watching over their own hearts, and properly avoiding every thing which they have found Satan has employed to lead them astray!

But though sobriety and vigilance will have a great tendency to preserve them from the temptations of the devil, yet they need something else to defend themselves against his violent assaults. And the best weapon they can possess and employ is the word of God. By this weapon, our Saviour gained the victory in the hour of temptation. Satan quoted scripture to seduce him from his duty; and Christ quoted scripture, which at once condemned and defeated his design. Let christians follow this example of the great Captain of their salvation, and foil Satan with his own weapon. Let them diligently read and carefully treasure up the doctrines, the precepts and the promises of the gospel, that they may always be prepared to discover the devices of the devil, and resist all his efforts to lead them into the belief of error, or the practice of sin.

Though these are some of the best means they can use to overcome the tempter, yet, if they would insure success, they must sincerely implore the aid and influence of Him who is stronger than the strong man armed. It ought to be daily their heart's desire and prayer to God, that he would "lead them not into temptation, but deliver them from evil." He is able to prevent their being tempted above what they are able to bear, and with every temptation to make a way for their escape. In a word, let them seriously ponder and cordially obey the solemn exhortation of the apostle upon this subject: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

But the case of sinners is more alarming, and calls for a

more solemn admonition to duty. They are dead in trespasses and sins, and wholly under the dominion of the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He is constantly endeavoring to blind their minds, harden their hearts, and stupify their consciences. Hence says the apostle, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is in vain to exhort sinners to resist the devil, who is seeking, not only to injure them in time, but to destroy them in eternity, while they remain his cordial subjects, and unite with him in opposing God and the whole scheme of redemption. Their first and indispensable duty is to renounce the spirit and kingdom of Satan, and cordially embrace the gospel. And as soon as they turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, they will have the power and grace of the Almighty engaged to guard them from their mortal enemy. But if they will reject the counsel of God against themselves, and walk in the paths of the destroyer, they must expect to hear that awful sentence pronounced against them at the great and last day, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

PART IX.

ORIGINAL STATE OF MAN.

SERMON XXXIII.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE PRIMITIVE RECTITUDE OF ADAM.

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright. — Eccl. vii. 29.

It is one mark of our universal depravity, that we have been so prone to reproach our common progenitor. No parent, perhaps, has ever been treated with so little propriety and respect, as Adam. Some of his undutiful children have virtually charged him with all the sin and guilt in the world; while others have even ventured to call in question his moral purity and perfection before his fall. But Solomon speaks of our first parent with peculiar veneration, and represents him, in his primitive state, as far superior to any of his degenerate offspring. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." These words naturally lead us to ascertain and support the primitive character of Adam.

Here let us first consider what we are to understand by his being made upright.

The true import of this term appears from the connection in which it is used. Solomon is not speaking of that noble aspect and erect posture of Adam, by which he excelled the lower species; but of that moral rectitude, or integrity of heart, by which he excelled all his own posterity. For he tells us in the text and context, that after taking a serious and extensive view of mankind in their various situations and pursuits, he drew up this general conclusion in his own mind: that the human race had greatly degenerated from the moral purity and integrity of their first parent, and employed all their noble powers to find out new and different ways of gratifying their

extremely depraved hearts. The inspired writers commonly use the term *upright* to signify that quality of the heart which forms the highest beauty and perfection of human nature. We read, "The Levites were more upright in heart than the priests." Solomon, speaking of the integrity of his father David, says, "He walked before God in uprightness of heart." And David commonly makes use of this phrase, when he would express his own integrity, or the integrity of others. "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart." "My defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart." "The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrows upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart." "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." "O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart." "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him: and all the upright in heart shall glory." "Judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it." "Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the upright in heart." "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in heart." It appears from these passages of scripture, that uprightness belongs to the heart, and gives a man his moral character. And this leads us to understand the term upright, in the text, as denoting moral rectitude, or perfect holiness.

The way is now prepared to show, in the second place, that God did make the first man upright, in this sense of the word. We are now come upon disputed ground, which requires us to proceed with great caution and perspicuity. And therefore it may be proper to observe,

1. That God *might* have made Adam upright in heart.

This is denied by many men of great learning and ingenuity. They suppose it was beyond the power of the Deity to make man morally upright, or create him in righteousness and true holiness. This is the opinion of two very ingenious and respectable authors, who have expressed their minds freely upon the subject. Doctor Taylor confidently asserts, "That it is utterly inconsistent with the nature of virtue, that it should be concreated with any person; because, if so, it must be an act of God's absolute power, without our knowledge or concurrence; that moral virtue, in its very nature, implieth the choice and consent of the moral agent, without which it cannot be virtue and holiness; and that necessary holiness is no holiness. To say that God not only endowed Adam with a capacity of being righteous, but moreover that righteousness and true holiness were created with him, or wrought into his nature, at the same

time he was made, is to affirm a contradiction, or what is inconsistent with the nature of righteousness." Doctor Chauncey agrees very nearly with Doctor Taylor; for speaking upon this subject, he says, with his usual elegance and accuracy, that "Man was made male and female, the most excellent creature in this lower world, possessing the highest and noblest rank; that he was made by an 'immediate' exertion of almighty power, and not by God's agency, in concurrence with second causes, operating according to an established course or order; that he was made in the 'image of God;' meaning hereby, not an actual, present, perfect likeness to him, either in knowledge, wisdom, holiness or happiness, but with *implanted powers* perfectly adjusted for his gradually attaining to this likeness, in the highest measure proper to a being in his rank in the creation." Though Doctor Chauncey does not expressly deny, as Doctor Taylor does, the possibility of God's making man upright, yet his mode of treating the subject plainly implies it. They both suppose that virtue or true holiness must be the sole work of man, and of course suppose that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that it should be the work of God. This is the objection against God's creating Adam in righteousness and true holiness, set in the fairest and strongest light. Let us now consider what there is to invalidate this objection, and to make it appear that God might have made man upright.

And here I may observe, in the first place, that it is agreeable to the nature of virtue, or true holiness, to be created. The volitions or moral exercises of the mind are virtuous or vicious in their own nature, without the least regard to the cause by which they are produced. This is apparent upon the principles of those who deny the possibility of created holiness. Doctor Taylor pleads that holiness consists in the free, voluntary choice of the agent. This is undoubtedly true, and agreeable to the dictates of common sense. But if this be true, the excellency of virtue or holiness consists in its nature, and not in its cause. For, if there cannot be a volition before the first volition, then the first volition of every created agent must have a cause altogether involuntary. This must certainly have been the case with respect to Adam. His first volition could not proceed from a previous volition; and therefore his first volition proceeded from some involuntary cause. And if it proceeded from an involuntary cause, it matters not whether that cause was within, or without himself. For, if it were altogether involuntary, there could be no moral goodness in it; since it is granted by all, that virtue or true holiness consists in the free choice, or voluntary exercise of the agent. So that if Adam ever began to be holy, his first holiness consisted in his first

benevolent volition, and not in the cause of that first virtuous and voluntary exercise. But if his first holiness consisted in his first benevolent volition, then it might have been created or produced by the Deity, without destroying its benevolent and virtuous nature.

I may farther observe, that holiness is something which has a real and positive existence, and which not only may, but must be created. The free, voluntary exercises of the mind can no more come into existence without a cause, than any other objects in nature. And it is equally certain that Adam could not be the efficient cause of his own volition. He was a dependent creature. He lived and moved and had his being in God, and without him he could do nothing. Such a dependent creature could no more produce his own volitions than his own existence. A self determining power is an independent power, which never was and never could be given to Adam. And if he never had a power of originating his own volitions, or making himself holy, then he must have for ever remained without holiness, unless God had seen fit to make him holy, or morally upright.

And this, I proceed to observe, he might have done. He has the power of production. He can create, or bring out of nothing into existence, whatever he pleases. His power is absolutely unlimited and irresistible. As he can create a body and create a soul, which are lower kinds of existence, so he can create virtue or true holiness, which is the highest and noblest kind of existence. But we have no occasion to employ fine spun reasoning to prove that holiness comes within the sphere of divine agency, since the scriptures clearly decide this point. They ascribe the production of holiness to God, as his own proper and peculiar work. They assure us, that he can give men a heart to know him; that he can make them willing to submit to him; that he can take away their stony hearts, and give them hearts of flesh; that he can create them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; that he can work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; or, in a word, that he can harden or soften, or turn their hearts, just as he pleases. There is not a plainer truth in the Bible than this, that God can make men upright. And if he can make obstinate and hardened sinners upright, who can doubt whether he was able to make the first man, in the first stage of his existence, upright?

I may now advance another step, and observe,

2. That God not only might, but *must* have created Adam either holy or unholy.

Adam was created in a state of manhood. His body was completely organized, and every way fitted for the reception of

the soul. At the instant, therefore, in which his soul was united with his body, he became a perfect man, or moral agent. There was nothing farther necessary in order to the exercise of his moral powers, but the exhibition of external objects. And these were exhibited before him as soon as he opened his eyes upon the visible world. It is possible though not probable, that his first views were somewhat obscure and confused, like those of a man who awakes out of a sound sleep. But as soon, and perhaps much sooner than a waking man collects his thoughts, Adam collected his, and saw and felt the influence of surrounding objects, with all the clearness and sensibility that he ever did in his life. The power of perception sets all the other powers of his mind into motion; so that there could be no discernible distance of time between his seeing objects, and feeling moral affections towards them. As his completely organized body could not prevent the exercise of his moral powers, so there was nothing within, or without him, that could prevent his immediately commencing his moral agency, and exercising either holy or unholy affections.

To suppose that God implanted in his mind the principles of moral agency, without making him a moral agent, is extremely absurd. For, if God gave him the powers of perception, reason and conscience, he must have been immediately under moral obligation, which he must have immediately either fulfilled or violated, and so have immediately become either holy or sinful. To avoid this conclusion, Doctor Chauncey says, "these implanted powers did not afford Adam any present, actual knowledge, wisdom, holiness or happiness." I ask then, what they did afford him; or in what sense they were the powers of moral agency, when they neither enabled him to perceive any object, to know any truth, to enjoy any good, nor to do any action? Upon this supposition, Adam was as inactive and torpid after his soul was united to his body as before, and might have remained in that inactive, torpid state for ever, notwithstanding his implanted powers. For, if after his soul and body were united he might have remained destitute of sensation and perception one moment, he might have remained so one hour, one day, one year, or to all eternity. If any person can tell how Adam began to perceive, to love or hate, to choose or refuse, in any period of his life, he can as easily tell how Adam began to perceive, to love and hate, to choose and refuse, the first moment in which his soul was united to his body. If ever his implanted powers could constitute him a moral agent, they must have made him a moral agent in that very instant in which God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The apostle

tells us, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It was impossible, therefore, that God should make the soul of Adam like a clean piece of paper, and preserve it so a single moment after he had given him the power of perception. For, as soon as he perceived any object, he must have had some moral exercise towards it, which would have stamped his character either as virtuous or vicious. Hence it is clearly evident that Adam was created either sinful or holy; and since none pretend that he was created sinful, all must allow that he was made upright, agreeably to the declaration in the text.

I go on to observe,

3. That it appears from the account which Moses gives of the creation of Adam, that God made him upright. We have this account in Genesis, i. 26, 27. "And God said, Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness;* and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Some suppose this divine image consisted in the exterior glory of Adam's body, which resembled the exterior glory of the great Mediator, before he appeared in the form of a servant and tabernacled in flesh. But perhaps there is no just foundation for this opinion.

Others suppose this divine image consisted in the superior intellectual powers of Adam, by which he excelled all the inferior creation, and resembled the natural perfections of his Maker. There is indeed some truth in this supposition. The human understanding does bear some resemblance of the divine intelligence. And in this respect men still bear the natural image of God's natural perfections. Hence we are told since the Flood, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

But there is still a higher sense in which man might have borne the image of his Maker; and that is, in respect to his righteousness, or true holiness. God hath a moral, as well as natural character; or, he hath moral, as well as natural perfections. Adam, therefore, might have resembled him in his moral, as well as his natural attributes. Adam's heart might have resembled the heart of the Deity, as much as his understanding resembled the divine understanding. And since God designed to make man resemble himself, it is most natural to suppose that he would make him resemble himself in the highest and noblest point of resemblance; that is, in his holiness, or moral excellence. This reasonable supposition we find to be scrip-

tural. For we are assured that God did make Adam a man after his own heart, or in his moral image, by the apostle Paul, who explains the image of God in man, in this noble and important sense. To the Ephesians he says: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And he represents the Colossians as actually bearing this moral image of their Maker: "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." It appears from these passages that the image of God in saints consists in moral rectitude, or uprightness of heart. If we allow scripture to explain itself, we must conclude that God made Adam holy and upright. For we are told by one inspired writer that God made man in his own image, and after his own likeness; and by another, that the image and likeness of God in men consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

I may observe once more,

4. That the history of Adam from the time of his creation to the time of his eating the forbidden fruit, affords a clear and convincing evidence of his being originally formed in the moral image of his Maker. We are told that after God formed man, the last of his works, "he saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." But how could man, who was a moral agent, be very good, unless his heart, or moral character, was pure and holy? Had he been destitute of virtue, or true holiness, he must have appeared extremely odious in the eyes of perfect purity. We are told that God blessed Adam; that he gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of the air, and over every living creature; that he gave him the free use of all the fruits of the earth, and of all the trees of the garden, except one; and that to crown all his other earthly blessings, he provided a help-meet for him, who was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, the companion of his life, and the promoter and partner of all his felicity. While God bestowed these favors upon him, he gave an implicit approbation of his moral character. Besides all this, God kept up a friendly and familiar intercourse with him. He appeared to him and conversed with him from time to time, with great freedom and condescension. He brought all the animal tribes before him, and allowed him to give them such names as he pleased. He pointed out to him his daily employment, and directed him to dress and keep the garden of Eden. And

finally, he gave him one plain, easy, positive prohibition, by observing which he might confirm himself in holiness, and secure the perpetual favor and enjoyment of his Maker. How long this intercourse between God and Adam was continued, the scripture does not inform us. Mr. Worthington supposes, however, that it continued several months. But divines in general suppose it was of very short duration, even less than twenty-four hours. This they conjecture from God's appearing to Adam after he had sinned, in the "cool of the day;" which they imagine means the evening of the day in which he was created. But the various transactions which took place between the creation of Adam and his apostacy from God, seem to require a longer space of time; and why a longer space may not be allowed, it is not easy to say. But whether that term were longer or shorter, the history of Adam clearly proves that his eating the forbidden fruit was his first sin. And if that were his first sin, there can be no doubt but he was perfectly holy and innocent until he had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Accordingly his history informs us that then, and not till then, God manifested his displeasure towards him, denounced the sentence of death, cursed the ground for his sake, drove him out of Paradise, and subjected him to all the pains and miseries of the present life. This confirms all the preceding observations, and sufficiently proves that God made man holy, or morally upright.

I shall now close the subject with a few remarks on the primitive state and character of Adam.

1. He was a noble and excellent creature, as he came from the forming hand of his Maker. Some entertain very low and unworthy ideas of our first parent in his primitive state. They imagine he was equally destitute of virtue and vice, and equally inclined to either. And though they admit he might gradually acquire some moral goodness, yet they suppose his primitive virtue was far inferior to the virtue of some of the ancient patriarchs, and too weak to resist such strong temptations as their virtue often resisted and overcame. As they suppose it required no great abilities to keep and dress the garden of Eden, and to give names to the various and numerous species of animals, so they conceive that his intellectual faculties were as low and mean as the several kinds of business in which he was employed. Indeed, they scruple not to say that they can discover no superior greatness nor goodness in the first man, in his first and paradisaical state.

But we ought to entertain a much higher and better opinion of our great progenitor, while he retained his primitive dignity and moral rectitude. He was made the natural and federal

head of millions of immortal beings. And there is no reason to doubt that his natural abilities and moral qualities were equal to his dignified station. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that his affections towards his Creator, and every inferior object, were perfectly right. He possessed more holiness than any of his descendants ever possessed in this imperfect state. Yea, he was in this respect but a little lower than the angels of light. And the history of his conduct gives us an exalted idea of his intellectual endowments. His attainments were surprisingly great and rapid. Who ever gained so much knowledge as he did, in so short a period? Before his fall he acquired the knowledge of God, of himself, of all the animal species, and of a new and unknown language. Have any of his numerous posterity been able to learn so much in a few days, or even in a few years? But it may be said that he was miraculously assisted in his intellectual attainments. Be it so; yet his mind must have been very capacious, very strong, and very penetrating, to take in so much knowledge, and to apply it to such a vast variety of cases, in so short a period of time. No man since the fall has ever displayed so much greatness of mind and goodness of heart as Adam displayed, while he resided in Paradise and enjoyed the favor of his Maker. And if we only consider his character and conduct in a just and candid manner, we shall not hesitate to pronounce him, in his primitive state, the greatest and best of men.

2. How happy was Adam in his original state of moral rectitude and perfect innocence! His body was full of vigor and free from pain. His mind was full of light, and free from error. His heart was full of holiness, and free from moral impurity. His eyes and ears were feasted with a vast profusion of new, beautiful, grand, and delightful objects. His inheritance was rich and large, comprehending the world and the fulness thereof. He sensibly enjoyed the love and approbation of his Creator. He was permitted a free and unrestrained access to the fountain of holiness and happiness. God presented him with the delightful prospect of a numerous and happy posterity. Heaven and earth appeared unitedly engaged to raise him as high in knowledge, holiness and felicity, as his nature would admit him to rise. There was nothing within nor without to interrupt his enjoyments, nor to bring a cloud over his bright and extensive prospects. His habitation was Paradise, and his heart was heaven.

3. While Adam was placed in such a perfectly holy and happy situation, it is extremely difficult to conceive how he should be led into sin, without the immediate interposition of

the Deity. His perfect holiness would naturally lead him to repel, with abhorrence, every temptation to disobey and dishonor the Being whom he supremely loved. Our Saviour's supreme affection to his Father prompted him to resist the devil, and baffle every temptation to sin which his malice and subtilty could suggest. And though the tempter pursued him with his assaults forty days, yet he could find nothing in the perfectly holy heart of Christ for any temptation to take hold of. So there was nothing in the perfectly holy heart of Adam, that could give Satan the least advantage against him. His perfect holiness, so long as it continued, was a perfect security against any temptation which any created being could suggest. The first Adam was as totally disposed to resist the devil in Paradise, as the second Adam was to resist him in the wilderness. They were both perfectly holy, and being perfectly holy, they both stood superior to all external temptations. It is in vain to attempt to account for the first sin of the first man, by the instrumentality of second causes. And until we are willing to admit the interposition of the supreme first Cause, we must be content to consider the fall of Adam as an unfathomable mystery.

4. The fall of Adam was, in its own nature, a most melancholy event. By his first transgression, he forfeited all good, and exposed himself to all evil. The moment he sinned, he found himself completely ruined. His situation was extremely distressing. How could he look back, and recall his past hours of peace and sweet enjoyment? Or how could he look forward, and anticipate the scenes of endless darkness and despair? If Esau could not endure the loss of his birth-right, how could Adam endure the loss of a temporal and eternal Paradise? This deep sense of misery was attended with a deeper sense of guilt. He knew that he had destroyed himself by his own voluntary disobedience. His conscience reproached and condemned him, for injuring the greatest and best of beings. Guilt and fear tormented his breast; shame and confusion covered his face. He dreaded the appearance and frown of Him whose presence and smiles he once enjoyed. He attempted to hide his guilty head from the face of his Maker; but neither trees, nor rocks, nor mountains, could screen him from the eye and hand of his Judge. That awful and sovereign voice, which cried, "*Adam, where art thou?*" brought him trembling and despairing before the supreme tribunal, where he expected to receive the due reward of his deeds. Such a scene must have been extremely solemn. Our fallen father must have viewed himself, and must have been viewed by all created

beings as irrecoverably lost. There was not the least gleam of hope in his case. Hence,

5. It was an act of astonishing grace in God to provide a Saviour for fallen man. He had deserved and expected to die. God might have justly treated him as he had treated fallen angels, and doomed him to a state of endless ruin. But instead of giving him up into the hands of his tempter and destroyer, he graciously assured him that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." This was the greatest and most unexpected display of divine grace that God ever made to any of his creatures. And though the situation of Adam prepared him to have a high sense of the grace of God in providing a Saviour for himself, yet he had but a faint and low conception of the richness and fulness of the first promise, as it respected his numerous posterity. The promise of a divine Redeemer contained good enough to counterbalance all the natural and moral evils of the fall, and in that way to defeat and disconcert all the malignant designs of Satan. God intended, by saving men through the mediation of Christ, to make the universe more holy and happy, than if Satan had never introduced either natural or moral evil into it. And, therefore, though sin and misery have abounded through the fall of man, yet holiness and happiness shall much more abound through his recovery by Jesus Christ.

6. Those who have recovered the moral image and favor of their Maker, which Adam forfeited and lost, are in a much more safe and happy situation than he was, even before the fall. Adam held all his holiness and happiness by an uncertain tenure; but saints have built their hopes upon better promises. Adam was to be completely holy and happy on the condition of persevering obedience; but saints are secured in holiness and happiness for ever, upon the first holy and virtuous exercise. Adam had no promise of persevering grace; but saints have the promise of divine aid and influence, to carry them through all the duties and dangers of their probationary state. Adam had the hopeful prospect of perpetually enjoying the blessings of divine goodness; but saints have the assurance of perpetually enjoying the blessings of divine grace. Adam might expect to be but a little lower than the angels in divine enjoyments; but saints may hope to rise above those exalted spirits in pure and permanent felicity, and to sing a new song which none but the redeemed from among men will ever be able to learn.

7. Since the primitive glory and felicity of Adam resulted from his bearing the image and enjoying the favor of God, it is certain that none of his posterity can rise to true greatness

and real happiness, until they put off the old man and put on the new. The most shining talents, the most rich inheritance, and the most amiable accomplishments, can never supply the want of the divine image and favor in any of the children of men. The sinner, with all his boasted attainments, appears to the eye of God a mean, vile, contemptible being. Every son of Adam must be conformed to the moral image of his Maker, in order to be a truly respectable and happy man. This subject, therefore, calls upon all sinners, without distinction, to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, in order to attain the highest dignity of their nature, and the chief end of their being. Remember this, O ye transgressors, and show yourselves men.

PART X.

APOSTACY OF MAN.

SERMONS XXXIV.—XXXV.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE LAW OF PARADISE.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. — Gen. ii. 17.

This is a very important passage of scripture, and may be justly considered as a key to both the Old and New Testament. A right understanding of this law of Paradise is necessary, in order to get a clear knowledge of the most essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and no less necessary in order to detect and refute many great and dangerous errors which have prevailed, and which still prevail, in the christian world. Both orthodox and heterodox divines have been constrained, in forming their different systems of religious sentiments, to set out from precisely the same point; that is, the law given to Adam in a state of innocency; because it was his violation of that law which gave rise to the whole gospel scheme of salvation. The most gross and dangerous errors, which have been embraced and propagated by different denominations of christians, may be easily traced up to some misconception and misconstruction of what God said to Adam concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After God had formed Adam of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul, he put him into the garden of Eden, in which there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food, together with the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in

the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Here God appears the supreme lawgiver, and speaks to Adam with infinite authority. He commands him to eat of every tree of the garden, except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But he forbids him to eat of that tree upon the pain of death, the proper wages of sin. The subject before us is unquestionably important, and deserves a full and fair discussion. It is proposed, therefore, in the present discourse to show,

I. That God has a right to give law to all his intelligent creatures.

II. That he did give a proper law to Adam respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

III. Wherein that law was like all other divine laws.

IV. Wherein that law was unlike other divine laws.

V. What that law threatened in case of disobedience.

I. I am to show that God has a right to give law to all his intelligent creatures. It is the part of a superior to give law to an inferior. Every lawgiver must be supreme, in respect to those to whom he gives law. In a civil community the lawgivers are supreme, in respect to judges, generals, and all executive officers, as well as to the body of the people. In an army, the first in command is supreme in respect to both officers and soldiers. Now if men derive their right to give law from their borrowed or delegated supremacy, then we may justly conclude that God derives his absolute right to give law to all his intelligent creatures from his original and underived supremacy. God is by nature supreme in all his natural and moral attributes. His power is superior to the united power of all created beings. His wisdom is superior to their united wisdom. His goodness is superior to their united goodness. He stands supreme among the whole intelligent creation, in point of power, wisdom and goodness, which are the most amiable and essential qualifications of a lawgiver. This *supremacy* alone is sufficient to give him the throne of the universe, and clothe him with the highest possible authority, to give law to all his intelligent creatures in every part of his vast dominions. His right to give law to his creatures is a right to make his will the rule of duty; which is the highest authority conceivable. It is not possible that the authority of the supreme Lawgiver should rise higher than to control the wills of all other beings according to his own will. But here the important point to be considered is, how God enacts his will into a law or rule of duty to the subjects of his moral government. This he does, by publishing his will to them in a certain manner. By publishing *his will*, I say, because there is no necessity of his publishing his design, intention or determination. This, as a lawgiver,

he has a right to keep a secret in his own breast. But he must *publish* his will, that is, his pleasure, in order to make his will or pleasure a rule of duty of legal obligation. God loves some things and hates others. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, but sin is the abominable thing that he hates. God is pleased when his rational creatures act right, but he is displeased when they act wrong. And it is this, his pleasure or displeasure, which he must publish, in order to make his will a law; and not his purpose or design. A great civilian* observes, that it is essential to law to be published. The will of God cannot become a law, until it is published. It is not material indeed by what means it is published, whether by writing, or by his own voice, or by the voice of one whom he authorizes to publish it; but by some means he must make known his own will, before his creatures can be bound by it. And he must also make it known in a certain *manner*, to give it the force and obligation of law; or in other words, he must publish his will *in the form of law*.

In the first place, he must specify the persons or beings to whom he speaks authoritatively. If he give law to angels, he must specify angels. If he give law to mankind, he must specify mankind. If he give law to a nation, he must specify the nation. If he give law to Adam, or to Abraham, or to any other particular person, he must designate that particular person. It is the principal design of the Deity in publishing his will, to specify those who are to be bound by it. This is absolutely necessary, in order to give his will the force and obligation of law.

Secondly, he must express his will in the form of a precept, or a prohibition, in order to clothe it with divine authority. He may express his desire or pleasure in the form of a wish. He once said concerning Israel, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" When God expresses his desire, or pleasure, or will, in such a form, it is no precept, or prohibition, and has no legal force and obligation. But when he says to a person, Thou shalt, or shalt not, do this or that, he expresses his will authoritatively, and gives it the form and obligation of law. This mode of speaking specifies the person whom he would have to act, or not to act; and at the same time points out the very thing that he would have him do, or refrain from doing; which gives his will the form of a precept, or prohibition, and the force of law.

Besides, thirdly, he must threaten to punish those who dis-

*Judge BLACKSTONE.

obey his precepts or prohibitions, in order to give his will the form and force of law. There can be no precept nor prohibition, without a *penalty* expressed or implied. The penalty is the sanction of a law, and expresses the whole authority of the lawgiver. The right to command always implies a right to threaten, and a power and a disposition to punish; and this right and power and disposition to punish in case of disobedience, must be directly or indirectly *expressed* in every law, whether human or divine. It is not necessary, indeed, that the penalty should be so exactly specified as the precept or prohibition. The mere expression of a disposition to punish constitutes a penalty, whether any particular punishment be mentioned or not. But such a disposition must be expressed, in order to give a precept or prohibition any legal force or obligation.

Thus God has an original and independent right, to make his will or pleasure a law or rule of duty to all his intelligent creatures. And whenever he does publish his will or pleasure in the form of a precept, prohibition and penalty, he does actually give law to all to whom his precepts, prohibitions and threatenings extend.

II. It is now easy to show, that God did give a proper law to Adam respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the Supreme Being, he had an unquestionable right to give law to Adam, whom he formed a rational creature and a proper subject of moral government. And if he intended to give law to Adam he could not have done it in more appropriate and definite words than those in the text: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." These words were addressed to Adam personally; they contained a precise prohibition, which was sanctioned by a precise penalty. Adam was the very person prohibited; the thing prohibited was his eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and the penalty annexed was death: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This was a proper *law* in distinction from any *covenant*, or *constitution*. It has been taken for a covenant, and styled the first covenant, and the covenant of works. But there appears to be no foundation for this opinion. A law is essentially different from a covenant. When our civil rulers make a law for the people, they do not at the same time and by the same act make a covenant with them. And it is equally true that when God made a law for Adam, he did not at the same time and by the same act make a covenant with him. It does not appear that God ever made any covenant with Adam but the covenant of grace, after his

fall. He certainly made no other covenant with him in Paradise. A covenant is a mutual stipulation or agreement between two or more parties, upon certain conditions. But it does not appear that God stipulated with Adam, and Adam with God, respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam did not promise to refrain from eating of that tree; nor did God promise to reward him, if he should refrain from it. There was no form of a contract between God and Adam, which was absolutely necessary to constitute a covenant. But there was the simple and precise form of a proper law: Thou shalt not eat; and if thou eatest, thou shalt surely die. It is rather strange that this law should ever have been mistaken for a covenant.

Some, however, have supposed, that it was neither a law, nor a covenant, but a constitution. It is undoubtedly true that God did form a constitution respecting Adam and his posterity. But the constitution which he formed was only a rule for his own conduct, and not a rule of their conduct. He determined that Adam should be the public head of his posterity; that he would make his posterity holy and happy, if he obeyed the law respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but if he disobeyed, that he would bring them into the world in a sinful and perishing condition; and that, if they should be involved in sin and misery, he would provide a Saviour for their recovery and salvation. This was the essence of the divine constitution respecting Adam and his future offspring. But this constitution had nothing of the nature of law in it. It was merely a rule of God's own conduct, of which he gave no notice to Adam. It does not appear from any thing he said to Adam before his apostacy, that he let him know that he had placed him as the public head of his posterity; that he had determined to suspend their holy or unholy state, upon his obedience or disobedience; or that he had determined to provide a Saviour for them, in case his disobedience should involve them in guilt and ruin. We derive our knowledge of God's constitution respecting Adam and his posterity, not from the words of our text, but from subsequent parts of scripture, which inform us of the ruinous consequence of Adam's first sin to his posterity, and of the remedy which God graciously provided for their recovery and salvation.

It now appears, I trust, that God did give a proper law to Adam, respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was neither a covenant nor constitution. This should be understood and retained in the mind, in order to have a clear view of the subject before us. Much error and confusion have arisen, from not distinguishing the law forbidding Adam

to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from any prior constitution, or subsequent covenant. These are totally distinct, and should never be blended together. But many have believed and taught that the law given to Adam in Paradise was a covenant or constitution. So we have been taught from our earliest days, in the Assembly's Catechism. The question is there asked, "What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the state wherein he was created?" The answer is, "When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death." But where do we find that God promised to give life to Adam, upon condition of obedience? or where do we find that Adam promised to be obedient? We find no such promise on the part of God, nor upon the part of Adam. We find nothing more than a proper law, forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

III. I am next to show wherein this law of Paradise was like all other divine laws. Here it is easy to mention several important points of resemblance.

1. It was like all other divine laws in its nature. Every divine law which was given to Adam, and which has ever been given to his posterity, has required the heart, or internal holiness. God gave other laws to Adam besides that concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He required him to dress and keep the garden of Eden, and to name and govern the animal creation. These commands respected the heart, and required truly benevolent and pious exercises, or internal as well as external obedience. God commanded Noah to build the ark, and after he had built it he commanded him to go into it with all his family, and with some of every species of the lower animals; and these commands respected the heart, and required that very faith and love which he exercised in obeying them. In the ten commands which God gave to his people at Mount Sinai, he required them to love him supremely, and their fellow men as themselves. This, our Saviour said, was the true meaning of the Mosaic law. Indeed, this is the meaning of every divine law. When God commands any rational creature, he implicitly says to him, "Give me thine heart." And when he commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he required something more than a mere external abstinence from the forbidden fruit. Adam would have violated the divine prohibition if he had only thought hard of God, or inwardly murmured and repined, that he was forbidden to eat of the tree which appeared so

pleasant and desirable, even had he never put forth his hand to touch it. The law of Paradise was precisely like all other divine laws in its nature. It was a holy law, requiring internal, as well as external obedience.

2. The law respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was like all other divine laws in its extent. It extended to all who were specified in it, and to no others. This is true of all other divine laws. The command given to Abraham to sacrifice his son, extended to him, and to him alone. The command given to Christ to lay down his life and take it again, extended to him, and to no other person in the world. The command which he gave to his seventy disciples to go and preach the gospel, and work miracles in his name, extended to them, and to no other disciples. So the command given to Adam to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, extended to him, inclusive of Eve, and not to any of his posterity. As he, and not his posterity, was specified in the law, so it extended to him, and not to them. There is no reason to suppose that, if he had remained obedient until Cain and Abel had arrived to years of discretion, they would have been bound to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by virtue of the prohibition given to their parents. The prohibition specified and bound their parents, without respect to any of their posterity. Like all other precepts or prohibitions, it extended to those, and to those only, who were specified in it.

3. The law of Paradise was like all other divine laws in regard to its condemning power. Every divine law has a condemning power; that is, a power to condemn those who are bound by it, and actually transgress it. And the law given to Adam, respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, had the same condemning power, and did actually condemn those who were guilty of eating the forbidden fruit. But some suppose that it had the power of condemning not only those who actually transgressed it, but millions and millions of those who never could transgress it. They suppose that the threatening to Adam, in case of disobedience, extended not only to him, but to all his posterity, and did actually condemn them, as well as him, for his first transgression. This is to suppose, either that his posterity did actually eat of the forbidden fruit before they existed, or that they were condemned for a transgression which they never did, nor ever could commit; each of which suppositions is absurd in the extreme, and barely to mention it is sufficient to refute it.

But it may be of service here to point out the source of this absurdity. It arises from blending the law given to Adam, res-

pecting the tree of the knowlédge of good and evil, with a supposed covenant, or rather, constitution. It was the divine constitution, and not any divine law or covenant, that connected the moral character of Adam with the moral character of his posterity, or laid the foundation of their being brought into the world in a state of moral depravity and condemnation, in consequence of his first transgression. When our first parents transgressed, they, and they only, were condemned to die. But God had formed a *constitution* which was totally distinct from the law given to Adam; and according to this constitution, he determined that his posterity should become sinful or depraved, in consequence of his first sin. This constitution was neither expressed nor implied in the law respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and there is no reason to suppose that Adam knew any thing more of God's constituting him the public head of his posterity, than of his providing a Saviour for him and for them, in case of his disobedience. The law of Paradise, therefore, which was totally distinct from any covenant or constitution, had no power to condemn any but those who transgressed it; and in this respect, it was exactly like all other divine laws. This leads me to show,

IV. Wherein the law respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was unlike some laws which God has given to mankind. And here I can think of but one point of difference worthy to be mentioned; and that is, in respect to duration. This law was given to our first parents, to try their love and obedience; and as soon as it had answered this purpose, it ceased of course to have any legal force or obligation. After they had sinned, and were banished from the garden of Eden, it was only the tree of life of which they were forbidden to eat. The command given to Abraham was designed to try his faith and obedience; and as soon as these were tried and approved, he was no longer bound by it. The prohibition to our first parents was like this command to Abraham, in point of duration; and herein it differed from the law of love, and many other divine laws, which continue in force after they are obeyed, and after they are disobeyed. Men are bound to love God after they have hated him, as well as before; but our first parents were not bound to refrain from eating of the forbidden fruit, after they had once violated the divine prohibition. It now remains to show,

V. What punishment the law threatened to Adam, in case of disobedience. The words of the law are plain and explicit. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." There can be no question whether this law

threatened death as a punishment to Adam in case of his disobedience; but it is a very important question, what kind of death was intended. There are three kinds of death mentioned in scripture: namely, death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. Though all these kinds of death have been actually inflicted upon some of mankind, yet there is no reason to believe that they were all threatened to Adam, in case he should eat of the forbidden fruit. I shall therefore only inquire which of these deaths God really threatened to the first man for his first offence.

1. It is not to be supposed that he threatened him with mere temporal death, or the dissolution of the connection between the soul and body. This was not a punishment equal to the demerit of sin, and therefore could not be the punishment which was threatened. No temporary punishment was adequate to the guilt of transgressing a law clothed with the highest authority in the universe. It is true, human laws threaten only temporal death for the highest crimes. This is because they cannot inflict a greater punishment, and because they do not mean to punish sin as it really deserves, but only as it is necessary to punish it, in order to preserve the peace and promote the good of civil society. Whereas it belongs to God, as the supreme Ruler, to punish sin according to its just desert. It would have been derogatory to God, to have threatened Adam with mere temporal death, for breaking his holy law which deserved eternal destruction. We must suppose, therefore, that he threatened to treat him according to his desert, which required a punishment far greater than the mere dissolution of the connection between soul and body. Besides, it is apparent that temporal death was not threatened until after he had sinned, repented, and was forgiven; and consequently it could not be the punishment contained in the first threatening.

2. The death which God threatened to Adam for eating the forbidden fruit was not spiritual death. By spiritual death is meant what is directly opposite to spiritual life. Accordingly, the scripture sets these two kinds of death in contrast. Paul tells the christians at Rome, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." And he tells the believers at Ephesus, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. — But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." John tells his christian brethren, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Here spiritual death is set in direct contrast with spiritual life; and spiritual life is

represented as consisting in holy love. He that has true love to christians has passed from spiritual death to spiritual life; and he that is destitute of true brotherly love, abides in spiritual death. If, then, spiritual life consists in holy love, spiritual death, which is directly the opposite of holy love, must consist in nothing but selfishness, which is the essence of all sin. It is just as certain that spiritual death consists in sinful exercises of heart, as that spiritual life consists in holy exercises of heart. This account of spiritual life and of spiritual death is agreeable to the great law of love, and to the whole current of scripture, as well as to the experience of both saints and sinners. Saints experience no other spiritual life than that which consists in benevolent and gracious exercises. And those who are spiritually dead enjoy natural and rational life, and experience no other death than that which consists in selfish and sinful exercises. This, it is conceived, is a just and complete description of spiritual death, in distinction from temporal and eternal death. Spiritual death is nothing more nor less than sin itself. Now can we suppose that when God said to Adam: In the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die, he meant to threaten no other than spiritual death? Can we suppose that he threatened to punish him for his first transgression with the first transgression itself, which was the only thing for which he deserved to be punished? It is impossible to conceive that his first sin could have been any punishment at all. It could not have been the punishment of any previous sin, for he had committed no sin before. It could not have been a punishment of itself, for he had deserved no punishment until after he had actually committed it. It could not have been a punishment for any future sin, for the threatening had respect to that first sin, and to that only. To suppose that God threatened Adam with only spiritual death, if he should eat of the forbidden fruit, is to suppose that his threatening had no meaning at all. For if Adam had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he would have died a spiritual death; that is, become a sinner, if there had been no threatening at all. Supposing he had killed Eve, against which we find no threatening, would it not have been true that in the day he killed her, he would have died a spiritual death, or become a sinner? But in that case, would his becoming a sinner have been a punishment for his murder? Sin and the punishment of sin cannot be the same, and therefore spiritual death could not have been the punishment which was threatened to Adam for eating the forbidden fruit. But if the death threatened to Adam was neither spiritual nor temporal death, then the question still returns, what death was it? In answer to this, I observe,

3. That it was eternal death, or everlasting punishment. The Assembly of divines say, "Sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life, and in that which is to come." This is what Adam justly deserved for disobeying a divine prohibition clothed with infinite authority. It became the supreme Lawgiver to threaten everlasting punishment to the first transgressor of his holy law. Nor could he, consistently with his perfect rectitude, have threatened a punishment of less magnitude, or shorter duration. Surely sin was as great an evil in Adam, as in his posterity, and deserved as heavy a punishment. But we find that God has threatened eternal death, or everlasting punishment, to his posterity, for the least transgression of his holy law. It is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This death, which is the wages of sin, and which is set in direct opposition to eternal life, must mean eternal death, or everlasting punishment. Our Saviour plainly taught that eternal death, or endless misery, is the proper punishment of sin. He said to the unbelieving Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." He said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And he explained what he meant by these declarations, in the account he gave of the process of the last day. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Thus it appears that the death which is threatened to sinners, and which will be actually inflicted upon the finally impenitent as the proper wages of their sin, is eternal death, or everlasting punishment. And may we not hence conclude that the death threatened to Adam for his first transgression, was no other than eternal death, the only adequate punishment for the least violation of a divine law?

I might now pass to the improvement of the subject, were it not proper to take notice of two or three objections, which are strenuously urged against the supposition that eternal death was the only death threatened to Adam in case of disobedience.

First, it is said that the death threatened could not have been either temporal, or eternal, but only spiritual death; because it was to be inflicted on the very day of his transgression, and was actually inflicted on that day according to the very letter of the threatening. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But he did not die either a temporal or eternal death on that day, and consequently it was only spiritual death which was threatened and inflicted.

It is readily granted that he did die a spiritual death, the very day and the very moment that he tasted of the forbidden fruit; but this was his sin, and not his punishment. His spiritual death, which consisted in a free, voluntary violation of the divine prohibition, was the very transgression for which he deserved the punishment of eternal death, the only proper and adequate wages of sin. It is absurd to suppose that the threatening was designed to point out the particular time of its being executed. This is never the design of the threatening annexed to any law, human or divine. All that any threatening implies is, that the moment the law is transgressed, the transgressor is liable to suffer the penalty threatened. The threatening to Adam was, in this respect, similar to Solomon's threatening to Shimei. "For it shall be that on the day thou goest out and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die." It is always a matter of wisdom or discretion, and not a matter of justice, *when* the punishment threatened for the violation of any law shall be inflicted. All that justice requires is, that the punishment threatened shall not exceed the demerit of the transgressor. It was therefore a matter of wisdom or discretion, and not a matter of justice, whether Solomon should put Shimei to death the day he transgressed, or give him a space for reflection and repentance. And it was equally a matter of divine wisdom, and not of divine justice, whether God should execute the threatening to Adam on the very day he sinned, or nine hundred and thirty years afterward; or whether he should finally pardon and save him through the promised Mediator. There is not, therefore, the least ground to suppose that he did not threaten to punish him with eternal death, merely because he did not inflict that death upon him the very day that he partook of the forbidden fruit.

Secondly, it is said that a divine threatening always pledges the divine veracity; so that, whatever death God threatened to Adam, he was obliged to inflict it upon him, or violate the truth, which was morally impossible; for God cannot lie. But he did not cause him to die either a temporal or eternal death the day he sinned, which proves that spiritual death was the only death threatened. Besides, if eternal death had been

threatened, there could have been no room for a Mediator, but our first parents must have been for ever lost, and that without remedy.

It must be allowed that this reasoning is just and conclusive, if God does pledge his veracity to inflict the punishment which he threatens to the transgressors of his laws. But he never does pledge his veracity to inflict the punishment threatened in any law. There is a wide difference between a divine threatening, and a divine prediction and promise. God always pledges his veracity to fulfil a promise or prediction, and a threatening which implies a promise or prediction; but he never pledges his veracity to fulfil a bare threatening. A legal threatening is always a bare threatening, which implies neither a promise nor prediction. God sometimes predicts that the wicked shall be punished, and sometimes promises that they shall be punished. He predicted that the old world should be punished by the Flood; and in that prediction he pledged his veracity to destroy the ungodly, according to his prediction. God promised to destroy the Egyptians and Amorites, to prepare the way for the seed of Abraham to return from the land of Egypt to the land of Canaan; and in that promise he pledged his veracity to destroy those enemies of his people. And whenever God predicts or promises to destroy the wicked in favor of the righteous, his predictions and promises pledge his veracity, and lay him under moral obligation to inflict the punishments predicted and promised. But there is a wide difference between his predicting or promising to punish the wicked, and his merely threatening to punish them; and the reason is, that in predicting or promising to punish the wicked, he expresses his design, intention and determination to punish them, according to the true import of his promise or prediction; whereas in a bare threatening he expresses his disposition, and not his design, intention, or determination, to punish. When he gives law to his creatures, he expresses his disposition to approve and reward them for obedience, and his disposition to disapprove and punish them for disobedience; but he does not express his design either to reward or to punish them. A lawgiver never expresses his design, in either the precept or penalty of his law; and consequently never pledges his veracity to reward the obedient, or to punish the disobedient. This appears from the single consideration that every lawgiver has a right to repeal the precept or to forgive the penalty of his own law. In the case of Abraham, God repealed the precept requiring him to sacrifice his son Isaac; and in the case of Balaam, he repealed the prohibition forbidding him to go with the messenger of Balak. If then he has a right to repeal the

precept, he must have the same right to remit the penalty of his own law. But he would have no right to forgive in any case, if his threatenings always pledge his veracity to execute them. And since it must be allowed that he had a right to forgive Adam, it must be allowed that he did not pledge his veracity to inflict upon him the death he had threatened, either on the day he sinned, or at any other time. This is no novel or solitary opinion. Mr. Baxter, Dr. Gale, and Bishop Stillingfleet, professedly treating upon the subject, maintained that God did not pledge his veracity to inflict the death which he threatened to Adam in case of his eating of the forbidden fruit. And the venerable Assembly of divines express the same sentiment. They ask, "What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?" And they answer, "All mankind by the fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." If God does pledge his veracity in his threatenings, then all mankind, who are under his wrath and curse, are not only liable to the pains of hell for ever, but must actually suffer them to all eternity. There is therefore no more reason to believe that God pledges his veracity in a simple threatening, than to believe that all mankind will be for ever lost. We may hence conclude that God might have pardoned and saved Adam, notwithstanding he had threatened to punish him with eternal death for his first offence.

Thirdly. It may be said that if God did not pledge his veracity to execute the threatening to Adam, then he had nothing to fear either before or after he had transgressed the divine prohibition. As the threatening did not lay God under obligation to fulfil it, so it had no tendency to deter him from eating of the forbidden fruit, nor to alarm his fears after he had eaten of it. And if God did not pledge his veracity to execute the threatening to Adam, then there is no reason to think that he pledges his veracity to execute his threatenings to the finally impenitent under the gospel; and consequently there is ground to believe that they will all be finally saved.

It does by no means follow from the supposition that God did not pledge his veracity to execute the threatening to Adam, that it had no tendency to deter him from disobedience, nor to alarm his fears after he had disobeyed. Though God's mere threatening did not pledge his veracity nor his design, yet it did clearly express his disapprobation of his disobedience, and his disposition to punish him, if he disobeyed. And after he had disobeyed, he had just grounds to expect to be punished; for God had a right to punish him; God had power to punish

him; and God had expressed his disposition to punish him. He had every reason to expect that God would punish him, except his pledging his veracity; which he does not, cannot pledge in a bare threatening. So that the threatening which expressed the right, the power and the disposition of God to punish him, was perfectly calculated to deter him from disobedience, and to sink him into despair of mercy after he had disobeyed. This answer applies with equal force to the threatenings which God has denounced against the finally impenitent under the gospel. God has a right to punish them according to his threatenings; God has power to punish them according to his threatenings; and God has expressed his disposition to punish them according to his threatenings; so that they have every reason to expect to be punished, and no reason to expect to escape punishment. And surely such threatenings are perfectly calculated to deter them from rejecting the gospel, and to alarm their fears of being for ever lost, if they finally reject the counsel of God against themselves. But allowing it to be true that the mere threatening, "He that believeth not shall be damned," does not render it absolutely certain that those who die in impenitence and unbelief shall be finally lost; yet there are other threatenings which pledge the divine veracity, and render it absolutely certain that all who die in impenitence and unbelief shall certainly perish for ever. There is one species of divine threatenings to the wicked, which imply promises of mercy to the righteous. We read, "The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright." We read, "The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea," "for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion." We read, "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob — I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." There is another species of divine threatenings to the wicked, which imply predictions of their future punishment. Our Lord predicted, that "the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." He also predicted the day of judgment: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye

cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." All these divine threatenings to the wicked, which imply either promises or predictions, pledge the divine veracity, and lay God under moral obligation to execute them. It is therefore just as certain that all the finally impenitent will be sentenced to eternal destruction, as that there will be a day of judgment.

But supposing such divine threatenings, as imply either a promise or a prediction, do pledge the divine veracity, and consequently do prove that all who die in impenitence and unbelief shall certainly be condemned to eternal punishment at the last day; yet it may be asked, How does it appear from such a sentence that God may not, in some future period of eternity, pardon and save those whom he had doomed to endless misery, if his last threatening does not pledge his veracity?

To this I answer, the gospel itself shuts up every door of hope to the vessels of wrath. For if God should pardon and save them, he must do it either on account of a greater or a less atonement than that which Christ has made, or without any atonement at all. But it is certain that no greater atonement can be made than that which Christ has made; and therefore God cannot pardon and save them on account of an atonement greater than the atonement of Christ. There is no reason to suppose that God will ever pardon and save them on account of a less atonement than the atonement of Christ, after he has condemned them to eternal destruction for rejecting that very atonement. And if he will not pardon and save them on account of a less atonement than the atonement of Christ, it cannot be supposed that he will pardon and save them without any atonement at all. It now appears, I trust, that the supposition of God's not pledging his veracity in his threatening to Adam, or in his threatenings to the finally impenitent, does not afford the least countenance or support to the doctrine of universal salvation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that mankind have never suffered any kind of punishment, by virtue of the law of Paradise. That law was given to Adam exclusively of his posterity, and neither required any thing of them, nor threatened any thing to them. He alone was required to abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; he alone was threatened with eternal death, in case he disobeyed the divine prohibition; and after he had disobeyed, he alone deserved the punishment threatened. It was morally impossi-

ble, therefore, that his posterity should have been involved either in the guilt or punishment of his first transgression, which he alone committed before they existed. But here it may be asked, Did not the fall bring all mankind into a state of sin and misery? and does not the apostle plainly tell us so, when he says: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned?" It is readily granted that all mankind have been brought into a state of sin and misery, in consequence of Adam's first sin. But this may be true, and yet they never suffer the least degree of punishment for it. Even supposing that we do derive a sinful nature from Adam, and do deserve to be punished for that sinful nature, and for all the sinful actions which proceed from it; and supposing still farther, that we are actually punished according to our deserts; this by no means implies that we are guilty of his first sin, or are punished for it. The only reason why any suppose that we are brought into a state of sin and misery, as a punishment for Adam's first offence, is because they suppose that he was our legal or federal head, by virtue of the law of Paradise. But that law did not make him our legal, or federal head. He became our public head or representative, not by virtue of any law or covenant, but by virtue of a divine constitution. God, as a sovereign, constituted him to be the public head of his posterity, and established a connection between his first sin and their future sin and misery. God determined that if Adam should eat of the forbidden fruit, he would bring all his posterity into the world in a state of sin and misery. But how does it appear, some may be ready to inquire, that God did make such a constitution? I answer, it appears both from scripture and from fact. It appears from scripture; for we read, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." And it appears from fact; because God has actually brought all mankind into the world in a state of sin and misery. This he could not have done by virtue of any law, or by virtue of any covenant; and therefore he must have done it by virtue of a divine constitution. He had a right, as a sovereign, to constitute a connection between Adam's first sin and the sin and misery of his posterity; and according to such a constitution, to bring them into the world sinful and miserable creatures, in consequence of his first transgression. By thus distinguishing the law of Paradise from a divine constitution, it is easy to account for all the consequences of the first apostacy, without supposing that God is so unjust as to punish any of Adam's posterity for his sin, which they never did nor could commit.

2. If the law of Paradise has been justly explained, then it

was not a covenant of works, as many have supposed. A great deal has been said and written about the first covenant of works, which God made with man in his primitive state, respecting both himself and all his posterity. But where do we find any such covenant in scripture? The law of Paradise was no such covenant; for it contained no stipulation or mutual agreement between God and Adam, in regard to himself, or his future offspring. God made no promise of good to Adam on condition of his perfect obedience, but only threatened him with eternal death, in case he disobeyed his positive command. There is indeed good reason to believe that if Adam had not transgressed the law of Paradise, he would have secured his own future innocence, and the future innocence of all his posterity, But this would have been not by virtue of any law, or covenant, but by virtue of a divine constitution. Had not this constitution been mistaken for the law of Paradise, and the law of Paradise for a covenant of works, it is probable that we should never have heard of any such thing as a covenant of works. There is no intimation in scripture that a covenant of works ever existed; and we must give up this unscriptural notion, before we can form clear and just ideas of the primitive state of Adam, and of the fatal effects of his fall upon his posterity.

3. If God did not, in the law of Paradise, pledge his veracity to execute the threatening upon the first transgressor, then it is easy to see that there was room for the interposition of a mediator, to make atonement for sin, and thereby open a door of mercy to the fallen, guilty race. But upon the common supposition that God did pledge his veracity to inflict eternal death upon Adam for his first transgression, the door of mercy must have been for ever shut, and no room left for a mediator. For no atonement that a mediator could make, could render it consistent for God to violate his veracity. This difficulty has occurred to many, who have attempted to solve it, but without success. It is not sufficient to say in this case, what has often been said, that God could and did maintain his veracity by executing the penalty of the law upon Christ, who was the substitute for Adam, and died in his room and stead. This is altering, instead of explaining the law of Paradise. It is supposing that the law said what it did not say. It did not say, in the day thou eatest thereof, thou or thy substitute shall surely die. If the law had said this, it is granted that the threatening would have left room for a substitute. But the law expressly said, "in the day thou [Adam] eatest thereof, thou [Adam] shalt surely die." Now if this threatening pledged the veracity of God, he was under infinite obligation to inflict the threatened punish-

ment upon Adam himself, and not upon Christ, or any other substitute. It was morally impossible for God to lie, or falsify his word of truth, to save Adam or the whole human race from eternal destruction. But if we suppose that God did not pledge his veracity in the first threatening to Adam, then we can clearly see that there was room for the interposition of a mediator, to make atonement for sin, and open a door of mercy to this fallen world. The construction, therefore, which has been given in this discourse, of the law of Paradise, is not only true, but highly important, because it removes an objection against the whole plan of redemption through the mediation of Christ, which cannot possibly be removed by the common construction of that law.

4. We learn from what has been said concerning the law of Paradise, that there was an absolute necessity of an atonement for sin, in order to the restoration of Adam and his sinful posterity to the moral image and forfeited favor of God. Though God was under no obligation to pardon and save Adam after he had sinned and deserved endless ruin, yet if he did pardon and save him, it was necessary that something should be done to display that vindictive justice which had been expressed in the threatening of eternal death. But on the supposition that only spiritual death was threatened, it is difficult to see any need of an atonement, in order to the pardon and salvation of sinners. Accordingly we find that those who suppose spiritual death was the only thing threatened to the first transgressor, maintain that no vicarious sufferings were necessary, in order to make atonement for the sins of the world, and that no such vicarious sufferings have been made by a mediator or substitute. But this opinion seems to militate against the whole current of scripture, and to render the whole plan of the gospel needless. For the apostle says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." And again he says, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If God could have consistently forgiven Adam after he had transgressed his law, without an atonement, he surely might have regenerated him without an atonement; for regeneration is an act of mere sovereignty, and not an act either of justice or injustice. God could have regenerated him without an atonement, as well as he could at first create him in his own moral image, without an atonement. The whole necessity of an atonement, therefore, originated in the moral impossibility of God's pardoning Adam after he had threatened him with eternal death, consistently with his attribute of vindictive justice. As soon as Adam had transgressed the positive command of God, he was conscious that his spirit-

ual death was not the punishment threatened, but the very thing for which he was threatened with eternal death. And it was the consciousness of his own ill desert, and of the vindictive justice of God, which alarmed his fears, and made him hide himself from the presence of the Lord. He knew that God was perfectly good, and consequently merciful; but he could not see how he could show him mercy consistently with his justice; and despairing of mercy, he fled from justice. This conduct of Adam clearly shows that he supposed God threatened him with eternal death for his first transgression, and that he could not see how it was possible for him to obtain mercy consistently with divine justice, without an atonement for the sin which he had committed, and by which he deserved eternal destruction. We may, therefore, safely understand the law of Paradise in the same sense in which Adam understood it; and infer from the threatening of eternal death for his first transgression, that there was an absolute necessity of an atonement for sin, in order to render it consistent with the justice of God to forgive and save any transgressors of his holy and righteous law.

5. If the law of Paradise threatened Adam with eternal death or everlasting punishment for his first transgression, then it was necessary, not only that some atonement should be made in order to the pardon and salvation of sinners, but that an atonement should be made by sufferings. Those who suppose that nothing but spiritual death was threatened to Adam for transgressing the divine law, suppose that no other atonement was necessary, but what might have been, and has been made by obedience. If their premises were true, their inference would be pretty natural. But it appears from what has been said, that their premises are not true. It was not spiritual, but eternal death, which was threatened for the first offence. And it was the vindictive justice of God, which he expressed in that threatening, that rendered an atonement for sin absolutely necessary, in order to the pardon and salvation of sinners. We cannot discover the nature of Christ's atonement, until we have discovered the necessity of it. But when we have found what rendered his atonement necessary, we may easily determine how he made it. If the necessity of his atonement was founded in the vindictive justice of God, then nothing he did could make the atonement, but what manifested that very vindictive justice which God expressed in his first threatening to Adam. And as it was not the obedience, but sufferings of Christ, which manifested the vindictive justice of God; so it was not his obedience, but his sufferings, which made the atonement for sin.

Now if we search the sacred scriptures upon this subject, we shall find clear and decisive evidence that Christ made atonement, not by obeying, but by suffering in the room of sinners. The apostle Peter says, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." If one innocent person suffers for another innocent person, he does not suffer in his room. If a noble patriot sacrifices his ease, his interest, or even his life, for his country's good, he does not suffer in the room of his country. But if an innocent person suffers for a guilty one, he may be said to suffer in his room. Suppose a father and son were in an army, and the son should do something worthy of stripes, and be condemned to suffer, and the father should voluntarily take the stripes due to his son; in that case, the father would properly suffer in the room of his son. So when Christ the just, suffered for the unjust, he suffered in their room. In this sense the scriptures represent Christ as suffering for sinners, to make atonement for them. They represent the sufferings of Christ as the most prominent and essential trait in his mediatorial character. We are told, "Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." When Moses and Elias appeared in heavenly glory on the mount of transfiguration, with Christ and a select number of his disciples, the subject of their discourse was not the life or obedience of Christ, but his vicarious and propitiatory death. "They spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." And when the apostles went round the world preaching the everlasting gospel, the burden of their discourses was, Christ crucified, or the cross of Christ. There is a vast variety of plain texts, which ascribe the atonement of Christ to his sufferings and death on the cross.

This is the import of all such passages of scripture as speak of his bearing the sins and iniquities of men. The prophet Isaiah uses this mode of expression in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." "And he bare the sins of many." The apostle Peter, speaking of Christ's sufferings, uses the same phraseology: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "So Christ," says the apostle Paul, "was once offered to bear the sins of many." To bear sin, in the sense of scripture, is to suffer on account of it. God said to Moses, "Thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death." If a person's bearing

his own sin or iniquity means his suffering for it, then Christ's bearing our sins and iniquities must mean his suffering on our account and in our stead.

Other passages of scripture represent the sufferings of Christ as a sin-offering or sacrifice. It is said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." It is said, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The apostle says to christians, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor." The epistle to the Hebrews abounds with similar expressions. Christ "needeth not daily as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself." "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." If the sacrifices for sin under the law were designed to typify the atonement of Christ, as the apostle here asserts, then he died in the room of sinners, and made atonement for them by making his soul an offering for sin, and shedding his blood on the cross. For when a Jew offered a sacrifice for sin, he stood and confessed his sins over it, and after he had slain it with his own hand, the priest took the blood of the bullock and made atonement for him. This signified that the transgressor deserved to die, but was spared through the atoning blood of the victim slain in his room. Such sacrifices clearly typified Christ, who was to make atonement for sin, to satisfy divine justice in the room of sinners.

This sentiment may be still farther confirmed, by all those passages of scripture which speak of Christ's death as a ran-

som, a propitiation, and a price of redemption. "Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold — but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." By such a great variety of expressions, the inspired writers have given us sufficient evidence that Christ made atonement for us by suffering, bleeding and dying on the cross. Neither his obedience to his parents, nor his obedience to the moral law, nor his obedience to the ceremonial law, nor his obedience to his Father's command to lay down his life, made the atonement for us; but it was his suffering and dying on the cross in our stead.

Finally, this subject teaches us the necessity of preaching the law, in order to preach the gospel. Some seem to imagine that the gospel may be as well and even better preached without the law, than with it. But this is a very erroneous and absurd opinion. Without seeing the nature and extent of the law, it is impossible to see the nature and design of the gospel. If there had been a law given, which could have given life to the transgressors of it, there would have been no occasion for the gospel, which opens the only door of hope to the guilty. Men must see that they are actually condemned by the law, before they can see their need of the gospel. Men must see the justice of the law, before they can see the grace of the gospel. Men must love the law, before they can love and embrace the gospel. The law runs before the gospel, through the whole Bible. It was through the medium of the law, that the gospel was preached to Adam. It was through the medium of the law, that the gospel was preached to Abraham. It was through the medium of the law, that the gospel was preached to David. Hence he said, "The law of the Lord is perfect,

converting the soul." It was through the medium of the law, that the gospel was preached to Paul. Hence he said, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Again he said, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." As Paul was brought to the knowledge and love of the gospel through the law, so he endeavored to lead others to the knowledge and love of the gospel, through the same medium. It was through the law, that he so clearly explained the gospel to the Romans. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." Though the gospel be distinct from the law, yet it presupposes the law, and is inseparably connected with it. Those who preach the law without the gospel, or the gospel as mere law, may be properly called legal preachers; but those who preach the law as the foundation of the gospel, and the gospel as built upon the law, are properly gospel preachers. To preach the law without the gospel, tends to make men despair of the mercy of God; and to preach the gospel without the law, tends to make men hope in the mercy of God, while they hate his justice; which is a fatal delusion. Let us then, my brethren, study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and declaring the whole counsel of God without fear, without favor, and without reserve. Amen.

SERMON XXXV.

ORIGINAL SIN.

By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. — Romans, v. 19.

The apostle undertakes, in this epistle, to lay open the gospel scheme of salvation. In the prosecution of this purpose, he proves that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and justly exposed to suffer the curse of the divine law. He next brings into view the atonement of Christ, as the only foundation of pardon and acceptance with God. This leads him to state the doctrine of justification through faith in the divine Mediator. But lest some should stumble at the idea of the sinner's being saved on account of his substitute, he proceeds in this chapter to illustrate the matter by a similar and well-known instance. He says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." He takes it for granted that the christians to whom he is writing, believed that Adam stood as the public head of his posterity, and so by his first offence exposed them to both sin and death. And this being taken for granted, he goes on to illustrate the saving influence of Christ's mediatorial conduct, by the destructive influence of Adam's probationary conduct. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The text, taken either in this connection or as an independent sentence, naturally leads us to consider the fatal influence of Adam's first offence upon all his natural posterity. This is an important subject; and in order to place it in as clear a light as I am able, I shall show,

I. That all men are sinners.

II. That Adam made them sinners.

III. How Adam made them sinners.

IV. Why God ordered it so that Adam should make them sinners.

I. I am to show that all men are sinners.

This melancholy truth has been universally acknowledged. All nations have perceived and lamented the moral corruption of human nature. The ancient poets, who have painted the moral characters of men, and the ancient historians, who have recorded their moral conduct, unite in exhibiting plain and incontestable evidence of human depravity. We cannot find, in all antiquity, one sinless nation or one sinless person. Human nature has been the same, wherever planted and however cultivated, in every age and in every part of the world. Though mankind have spread far and wide over the face of the earth, and lived under the influence of different climates, of different laws, and of different religions, yet they have universally discovered the same corruption of heart.

The truth of this account is fully confirmed by the express declarations of scripture. We read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." We read, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." Job demands, "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" David confesses before God, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And under this impression he prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Solomon puts the question to every child of Adam, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" And after a critical and extensive view of mankind, he observes, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought many inventions." The apostle Paul is still more plain and particular upon this point. "What then," says he, "are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they

not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes." These divine declarations, in concurrence with universal observation and experience, clearly demonstrate that all men without a single exception are sinners. The next thing is,

II. To show that we became sinners by Adam. The moral corruption of human nature is of great antiquity. The oldest heathen writers could not, by the light of nature or tradition, trace it back to its original source. They generally supposed, however, that man had actually degenerated from his primitive purity. They were loath to believe that he came out of the forming hand of his Maker, with a corrupt heart. But we have no occasion for conjectures on this subject. The scripture acquaints us with the original rectitude and first apostacy of the human race. The apostle ascribes the universal sinfulness and mortality of mankind to the first offence of the first man, Adam. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Therefore, by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; for by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." The one offence of Adam which the apostle here so often mentions, and which he represents as so fatal to mankind, was the offence of his eating the forbidden fruit; of which we have a particular account in the third chapter of Genesis. And he expressly declares that that single act of our first parent introduced sin and death among all his natural descendants from generation to generation. I proceed,

III. To show how we became sinners by Adam. The text says, that "by one's man's disobedience many were made sinners." This plainly implies that Adam's first offence was, in some way or other, the occasion of the universal sinfulness of his future offspring. And the question now before us is, how his sin was the occasion of ours. This is the most difficult branch of our subject; and in order to proceed upon plain and sure ground, I would observe,

1. That Adam did not make us sinners, by causing us to commit his first offence. His first offence, we know, was eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And since he committed that transgression before we were born, it is a plain dictate of common sense that we had no concern in it. We could no more eat of the forbidden fruit before we were born, than Adam could have eaten of it before he was created. And though we have been guilty of many and great offences, yet

we are all conscious that we never sinned with our first parent in his first transgression. Neither our reason nor experience, therefore, will allow us to believe that Adam made men sinners by causing them to eat of the forbidden fruit, which they never saw, in a place where they never were, and at a time before they existed.

Nor can we more easily believe,

2. That he made his posterity sinners by transferring to them the guilt of his first transgression. Guilt is a personal thing, which belongs to him alone who does a sinful action. The guilt of any action can no more be transferred from the agent to another person, than the action itself. It has just been observed, that Adam could not transfer his first act of disobedience to his posterity; and if he could not transfer the act itself, it is equally evident that he could not transfer the guilt of it. As he could not have made himself guilty of eating the forbidden fruit without his choosing to eat of it, so he could not make his posterity guilty of eating of the forbidden fruit without their choosing to do the same action. But we know that he never made them choose to commit his first sin; and therefore he could not bring them under the guilt of his first transgression. It was as much out of the power of Adam to transfer his own personal guilt to his posterity, as it is now out of the power of any other parent to transfer his own personal guilt to his children. So far we all have clear and distinct ideas upon this subject.

But here some may say, though Adam himself could not transfer the guilt of his first offence to his posterity, yet God, who is a sovereign, might transfer the guilt of that sin to all his descendants. It is true, indeed, that God is a sovereign, and hath a right to act as a sovereign, in governing all his creatures and all their actions. But may we suppose that his sovereignty allows him to do injustice, or treat any moral agents contrary to the eternal rule of right? It was unjust, in the nature of things, that the Supreme Being should transfer the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity. And no constitution which he could make, could render such a mode of conduct consistent with his moral rectitude. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Shall he, therefore, transfer the guilt of the father to the son? or shall he punish the son for the father's sin? No; the soul that sinneth, it shall die for its own iniquity. God has a sovereign right to transfer a favor from one person to another; but it is beyond the province of his sovereignty to transfer the guilt of an action from the proper agent to an innocent person. His sovereignty is limited by his justice, in his treatment of moral and accountable creatures. Hence we may safely con-

clude, that the guilt of Adam's first sin was never transferred from him to his posterity, by the authority or appointment of God.

Some, however, may still farther ask, Does not the scripture speak of imputation? and does not imputation suppose that God may and does transfer both righteousness and unrighteousness from one person to another? Though the scripture speaks of good and bad actions being imputed, yet it never speaks of their being transferred. This will appear, if we consider the scripture account of imputation. According to scripture, a man's own actions are imputed to himself when he receives the due reward of his deeds. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted," or imputed, "to him for righteousness." That is, he was rewarded for his own virtue, or received the benefit of his own goodness. Shimei, who had deserved to die for cursing David, came to him and said, "Let not my Lord impute iniquity unto me." That is, let me not suffer the just consequence of my own personal criminality. Thus men's own actions are imputed to themselves, when they receive the good or evil which their actions deserve. And according to scripture, the actions of one man are imputed to another, when one man receives benefit or suffers evil on account of another's conduct. David imputed the virtue of Jonathan to his son, when he showed kindness to the son for the father's sake. And God imputed the iniquities of the fathers to the children, when he made the children of Korah, Dathan and Abiram suffer, in consequence of their father's rebellion. But it is here to be observed, that in these instances of imputation there is no transferring of righteousness or unrighteousness from one person to another. The virtue of Jonathan was not transferred to Mephibosheth, nor the guilt of Korah to his children. But the virtue of Jonathan rendered it proper for David to show kindness to Mephibosheth, and the guilt of Korah rendered it proper for God to show his displeasure toward him, by punishing his children according to their own desert. This is the true and proper idea of imputation. And in this sense of the word it is granted, that God does impute the first sin of Adam to his posterity. Accordingly we read in the context: "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." But though both sin and death come upon us in consequence of Adam's first sin, yet that sin is not transferred to us, nor are we punished for it. The doctrine of imputation, therefore, gives us no ground to suppose that all mankind sinned in and fell with Adam in his first transgression, or that the guilt of his first sin was, either by him, or by the Deity, transferred to his posterity. Nor can we suppose,

3. That Adam made men sinners by conveying to them a morally corrupt nature. Moral corruption is essentially different from natural corruption. The latter belongs to the body, but the former belongs to the mind. Adam undoubtedly conveyed to his posterity a corrupt body, or a body subject to wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. But such a body could not corrupt the mind, or render it morally depraved. There is no morally corrupt nature distinct from free, voluntary, sinful exercises. Adam had no such nature, and therefore could convey no such nature to his posterity. But even supposing that he really had a morally corrupt nature distinct from his free, voluntary, sinful exercises, it must have belonged to his soul, and not to his body. And if it belonged to his soul, he could not convey it to his posterity, who derive their souls immediately from the fountain of being. God is the Father of our spirits. The soul is not transmitted from father to son by natural generation. The soul is spiritual; and what is spiritual is indivisible; and what is indivisible is incapable of propagation. Adam could not convey any part of his soul to his next immediate offspring, without conveying the whole. It is, therefore, as contrary to philosophy as to scripture, to suppose that Adam's posterity derived their souls from him. And if they did not derive their souls from him, they could not derive from him a morally corrupt nature, if he really possessed such a nature himself.

Besides, the scripture puts this matter beyond doubt. For the apostle repeatedly says that it was by *one* offence of Adam that his posterity became sinners. He calls it the offence; one man's offence; the offence of one; one man's disobedience. It was Adam's first offence of eating the forbidden fruit that ruined his posterity. But how could that first offence convey a morally corrupt nature to those who did not exist when it was actually committed? If Adam's first act of disobedience did not convey a corrupt nature to his posterity at the very moment when it was committed, it never could convey such a nature to them afterwards. And no one ever supposed that his first transgression immediately affected and polluted his posterity, who had then no existence. It is utterly inconceivable, therefore, that Adam should transmit a corrupt nature to his future offspring by his first act of disobedience.

But if Adam conveyed neither sin, nor guilt, nor moral depravity to his descendants by his first transgression, how then did that act of disobedience make them sinners? The only proper and direct answer to this question is,

4. That God placed Adam as the public head of his posterity, and determined to treat them according to his conduct. If

he persevered in holiness and obedience, God determined to bring his posterity into existence holy and upright. But if he sinned and fell, God determined to bring his posterity into existence morally corrupt or depraved. Adam disobeyed the law of his Maker; and according to the constitution under which he was placed, his first and single act of disobedience made all his posterity sinners; that is, it proved the occasion of their coming into the world unholy and sinful. By constituting Adam the public head of his posterity, God suspended their holiness and sinfulness upon his conduct. So that his holiness would constitutionally render them holy, and his sinfulness would constitutionally render them unholy or depraved. And this is the very idea which our text originally and clearly conveys. "By one man's disobedience many were *constituted* sinners." The word translated *made* ought to have been rendered *constituted*. Adam did not create or make his posterity sinners, but only constituted them such. His eating of the forbidden fruit violated that constitution which would otherwise have secured the holiness of all mankind. By his first transgression, therefore, he proved the occasion of God's bringing all his posterity into the world in a state of moral depravity. And in that way, and in that sense only, he made them sinners. It remains to show,

IV. Why God constituted such a connection between Adam and his posterity. The question is not, why God determined that Adam and his posterity should eventually become sinners; but why he brought about this event by placing Adam in a state of probation, and suspending the moral character of his posterity upon his conduct in his public capacity. We can easily see that God might have ordered the matter otherwise. He might have first made Adam sinful, and afterwards made his posterity like him, without forming any connection between his moral character and theirs. Why then did he not take this short and direct method, without first making Adam holy, and then placing him in a situation in which he meant he should fall, and by falling involve all his posterity in sin and ruin? To this it does not appear proper to answer, as many do, that God made Adam holy, put him into a state of probation, and constituted him the public head of his posterity, because it was more for his benefit and theirs that he should be placed in such a public capacity. It is more natural to conclude that if God had meant to consult the particular benefit of mankind, he would have confirmed Adam in holiness immediately upon his creation, and so have secured both his and their future holiness and happiness. We may reasonably suppose that God acted upon a broader scale than the particular good of Adam

or his posterity, and had a superior regard to his own glory, and the general good of the whole created universe. But though this was the general reason why God placed Adam in a state of probation and at the head of his posterity, yet several particular reasons for this part of the divine conduct may be suggested.

1. There was a propriety in trying human nature before it became corrupt. There is nothing better calculated to impress upon the minds of intelligent creatures a deep and lasting sense of their absolute dependence, than to be put into a state of trial. For this purpose God tried the angels before their revolt. And for the same purpose he saw fit to try Adam before he fell. Accordingly, in the first instance, he made him upright, and placed him in a state of probation; where he had a fair opportunity of confirming or of losing his original rectitude. And though God intended that both he and his posterity should eventually become sinful, yet, by this mode of conduct, he meant to convince both him and them, of their absolute dependence upon his sovereign will for the bestowment and continuance of his moral image. For,

2. By placing Adam, while perfectly holy, in a state of probation, God answered the same purpose that would have been answered by placing all his posterity in the same situation. By trying Adam, he virtually tried the whole human race. For Adam was as able and as likely to stand as any of his posterity would have been, had they been personally placed in similar circumstances. He was under the best advantages for standing the test of obedience, and for securing the everlasting approbation of his Maker. He was created in a state of manhood, and all his natural and moral powers were in their full vigor. He was capable of seeing the importance, and of feeling the obligations he was under of yielding perfect and perpetual obedience to the divine will. In these respects, he stood upon higher ground than any of his descendants could have stood, when they came into existence. So that they have no reason to imagine that they should have stood the trial any better than their first parent. His trial was a fair trial of human nature in its best estate. And since the first and best of men sinned and fell, all his posterity have sufficient evidence of being absolutely dependent upon God, without whose special influence they can neither become nor continue holy and happy. Besides,

3. By trying Adam singly and in the room of his posterity, God prepared the way to bring the Saviour of the world into view immediately after the fall. It would have appeared strange to Adam, and equally strange to his posterity from time

to time, if God had provided a Saviour for all mankind before it was made certain that all would become sinners and stand in need of a Saviour. But by making Adam the public head of his posterity, and connecting their moral character with his, God ascertained their future sinfulness by his first offence. For as soon as Adam needed a Saviour, it became absolutely certain that all his posterity would need one. This would not have appeared, had each individual of mankind stood for himself, as each individual of the angels did. One reason, therefore, why God placed Adam as the public head of his posterity, and suspended their moral character upon a single instance of his conduct, was because he intended to provide a Saviour for him and all his guilty race. This he did not intend to do for the angels after their fall; and therefore he placed each individual in a state of trial, to stand or fall for himself, without suspending the fate of all upon the conduct of one. We merely suggest these reasons for God's constituting Adam the public head of his posterity. For whether they are sufficient or insufficient to account for this instance of his conduct, is not very material; since neither our duty nor salvation depends upon our being able to clear it up. It is hoped, however, that what has been hinted may serve to remove some darkness and prejudice from the minds of those who have been much perplexed upon this subject.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the leading sentiments in this discourse, that Adam was the only person who committed and who was guilty of *original sin.* This phrase has been used to signify not only the sin of Adam, but the sin of Eve, and the sin of every one of their numerous posterity. It is true indeed, that Eve committed a first sin; and it is equally true that every other person has committed a first sin. But a sin's being the first that a person ever committed does not properly denominate it an original sin. Each angel that fell committed a first sin; but that first sin has never been called, nor considered to be, an original sin. This phrase is properly applicable to no other sin than that of Adam's eating the forbidden fruit. And that sin is properly called original, not because it was the first ever committed in this world, for Eve was first in transgression; nor simply because it was the first sin of the first man; but because it was that particular sin upon which the moral character of all mankind was constitutionally suspended. According to the divine constitution, that sin alone was the *occasion* of all the future sinfulness of Adam and Eve and their whole posterity.

And since it is improper to call any sin original sin, but that first sin of Adam, it is equally improper to say that any person ever committed, or was guilty of original sin, but the first man Adam. Though all men begin to sin in consequence of original sin, yet their beginning to sin is neither eating the forbidden fruit, nor consenting to eat it, nor doing any thing else which resembles the first sin of Adam, any more than the first sin of any other man. The act and guilt of Adam's first transgression were his own, and were never transferred to us. He committed and was guilty of original sin, and he alone. Though we have committed a multitude of other sins, yet we never committed that sin, nor stand in the least degree chargeable with it. To say, therefore, that all mankind are guilty of Adam's first transgression, is extremely absurd, and naturally tends to prejudice the minds of many against the true doctrine of original sin.

2. We learn from what has been said, that the true doctrine of original sin is clearly revealed in the Bible. This has often been called in question. Some suppose if such an important doctrine were true, it would have been much more frequently mentioned, and much more clearly revealed, in scripture. They imagine there is no trait of it to be found after the third chapter of Genesis, until we come to this epistle to the Romans, which is extremely obscure, and hard to be understood. It is readily granted that the idea which some have formed of original sin is no where revealed in the Bible. But that idea of it which has been exhibited in this discourse, and which we conceive to be the only true idea, appears to run through all the books of the Old and New Testament. Upon the first offence of our first parents, we read of God's providing a Saviour, not only for them, but for their future posterity. Immediately after this, we find sacrifices were appointed to prefigure a suffering Saviour, and through him the pardoning mercy of God to all penitent sinners. Under the law, circumcision was instituted, which plainly represented the native depravity of the human heart. This doctrine was uniformly taught by all the sacred writers, from Moses to Malachi. John the Baptist, and Christ himself, plainly and pointedly preached the same sentiment. Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, which signifies "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Paul represents Adam and Christ as two public heads of mankind, and plainly declares that we became sinners by the disobedience of the former, and may be saved from ruin by the obedience of the latter. Christ is represented, in the New Testament, as the Saviour provided for both Jews and Gentiles; and is expressly said to be a propitiation for the sins of the

whole world. And the predictions concerning the future spread of the gospel, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, carry the idea that mankind will all be sinful and need a Saviour, to the end of time. In such a great variety of ways is the constituted connection between the first sin of Adam and the sinfulness of all mankind, to the latest posterity, clearly revealed in the Bible. Neither the promises concerning the coming of Christ, nor the declarations concerning his design in coming, nor the descriptions of his sufferings and death, nor the positive institutions of the gospel, can be accounted for on any other ground than that of original sin. This doctrine lies at the foundation of all revealed religion; and to deny it, is virtually to deny the whole of divine revelation. For if it had not been for the original sin of the first man, there would have been no occasion for the sufferings and death of the second man, who is the Lord from heaven.

3. There is no ground to suppose, from any thing which has been said in this discourse, that Adam knew before the fall that he was the public head of his posterity, or that his conduct would determine the moral state in which they should come into existence. The divine prohibition and threatening were sufficient to acquaint him with his duty, and lay him under obligation to perform it. There appears to have been no more occasion for his knowing that his sin would destroy his posterity, than for his knowing that a divine Redeemer would come into the world and save them. God constituted the connection between him and his posterity, to regulate his own conduct, and to accomplish his own designs. And he might see a great impropriety in acquainting him with his public capacity before his first transgression. Our Saviour concealed the knowledge of his character and sufferings for a long time after he entered upon his public ministry, lest this knowledge should either retard or accelerate the event of his death. And God might foresee that it would frustrate his own designs, if he acquainted Adam with his public capacity before he had actually involved himself and his posterity in ruin. Accordingly we find the first prohibition and threatening were directed to him personally. God says, "In the day *thou* eatest thereof, *thou* shalt surely die." If we search the Bible from beginning to end, we shall discover no intimation that God informed Adam of his being placed as the public head of his posterity, before he actually sinned, and exposed them all to the fatal effects of his first transgression. And since the scriptures are entirely silent upon this point, it is by no means proper to take it for granted, and to reason from it as an established truth.

4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that

God did no injustice to mankind, in appointing Adam their public head. They have often complained of the injustice of God on this account. But they never had the least foundation for this general complaint. It appears from what has been said, that the constitutional connection between Adam and his posterity neither made his sin their sin, nor his guilt their guilt, nor exposed them to the least degree of punishment on his account. There could be no injustice, therefore, in God's appointing Adam the public head of his posterity. It is presumed the general complaint of injustice has originated entirely from a false idea of the divine constitution under which Adam was placed. God made that constitution to regulate his own conduct, and not to regulate the conduct of either Adam or his posterity. It was Adam's duty to obey the divine prohibition, whether he stood in a public or private capacity. And it is our duty to obey all the divine commands, notwithstanding his constituted relation to, and connection with us. The truth is, there was neither justice, nor injustice, in God's appointing Adam our public head. It was an act of mere sovereignty. God as a sovereign, had as good a right to make Adam the public head of his posterity, as he had to make him at all, or to place him in the garden of Eden, or to determine a single circumstance of his life. And, as a sovereign, he had as good a right to determine that his posterity should be sinners in consequence of his first offence, as he had to determine their numbers, their natural abilities, their outward circumstances and their final state. There is neither justice nor injustice, in God's determining what the moral characters of moral agents shall be; though there may be justice or injustice in his conduct towards them after their moral characters are formed. The constitution which connected Adam's sin with the sin of his posterity was such a constitution as God had an original and sovereign right to make. For if he had a right to bring us into existence, he had an equal right to determine how he would bring us into existence, whether as single detached individuals, like the angels, or as naturally and constitutionally connected with our first and great progenitor. And since God had a sovereign right to place us under such a constitution, we have no right to call it unwise, unjust or unkind.

5. It appears from what has been said, that our first parent laid us under no necessity of sinning. If he had transmitted to us a corrupt nature, or a sinful principle, we might have had some ground to suppose that we were obliged to sin by the fatal influence of his first transgression. But since that sin neither directly nor indirectly ever affected either our natural or moral faculties, it is certain that we act as freely and voluntarily in

committing sin, as we could have done if Adam had never sinned, nor stood in the least connection with us. It is true, indeed, his first offence, according to the divine design, determined the event of our becoming sinners. But the design of God never laid any of his creatures under a necessity of sinning. God designed that Adam should fall, and from eternity provided a remedy for it; but God's design laid him under no necessity of falling, nor of accepting the remedy provided. So, God's design that we should be sinners if he partook of the forbidden fruit, did not lay us nor any of his posterity under a necessity of committing sin. Neither scripture, nor reason, nor experience, teaches us that we are constrained to hate God, or transgress his holy and righteous commands, by virtue of any guilt, pollution, or depravity derived from Adam. We have no more right to cast the blame of our sins upon him, than he had to transfer his sin and guilt to us. He must answer for his own sins, and we must answer for ours.

6. If Adam has proved the occasion of involving all his posterity in sin, then children stand in peculiar need of a virtuous and pious education. They are all liable to sin as soon as they become moral agents. And there is a moral certainty, if they live, that they will run into evil, and incur the divine displeasure. This is a most alarming consideration to parents. They have been the occasion of introducing them into a sinful world, where they are in the utmost danger of dishonoring God, and of destroying themselves for ever. If parents would duly consider the deprayed hearts of their children, they would feel very solicitous to train them up in the way they should go; and, if possible, early instil into their young and tender minds the pure principles of religion and virtue. Nor would they neglect to lay all proper restraints upon them, to preserve them from the paths of the destroyer, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. The law of nature requires parents to promote the temporal happiness of their children, and the law of Christianity requires them to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And though they cannot sanctify the hearts of their children, yet they can instruct their minds, restrain their outward conduct, and commend them to him who is able to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. If they neglect to do these things, they will sin against God, and become accessory to the ruin of their dear offspring. But how can they bear the thoughts of seeing their children openly vicious and finally impenitent! It would have been better for them never to have been born, than to live and to die in sin. Their case, therefore, loudly calls for the compassion, the prayers and instructions of their parents, who are under

every tender and solemn tie, to do all in their power to promote their temporal and eternal happiness.

7. This subject calls upon all impenitent sinners immediately to repent and believe the gospel. They have no excuse for their enmity and disobedience to God. They have never been necessarily drawn into sin by any corrupt nature or corrupt principle derived from Adam. They have sinned freely and voluntarily, and have therefore destroyed themselves. In this guilty and perishing situation, it is their immediate duty to repent and look up to God for pardoning mercy through the divine Redeemer. He came to seek and to save those who are lost; and stands ready to receive all weary, heavy laden sinners. Let them no longer charge their misery and guilt upon God, nor upon Adam; but let them take the shame and blame of all their sins to themselves. And as they have freely and voluntarily sinned, so let them freely and voluntarily repent and believe the gospel. This is their immediate and important duty. They have no excuse for a moment's delay. Life and death are now set before them. It depends not upon the conduct of Adam, but upon their own choice, whether they shall be happy or miserable for ever. Though their sins have greatly abounded, yet if they repent and believe the gospel, the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, shall much more abound in their eternal salvation. Amen.

PART XI.

THE PRESENT STATE OF MAN.

SERMONS XXXVI.—XLI.

SERMON XXXVI.

NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

And was called a transgressor from the womb. — Isaiah, xlviii. 8.

In order to see the propriety of this declaration, it is necessary to look into the context, and see the method God takes to convince his ancient people of the native corruption of their hearts, which they were unwilling to acknowledge, and endeavored to conceal. — "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel." This was the noble profession they made, with a view to conceal the native corruption of their hearts. But the Lord of hosts tells them, "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate; and thy neck is an iron sinew and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee; lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image and my molten image hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened; for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast

called a transgressor from the womb." God here traces all the insincerity, stupidity, obstinacy, ignorance and unbelief of sinners to the native depravity of their hearts, which led them to disregard his commands and to disbelieve his predictions. The text in this connection naturally leads us to conclude,

That mankind begin to sin as soon as they become capable of sinning. I shall show,

I. What we are to understand by sin;

II. When men become capable of sinning;

III. That they do sin as soon as they become capable of sinning; and,

IV. Why they always have sinful exercises before they have any holy ones.

I. I am to show what is to be understood by sin. The apostle John has given us a concise and just definition of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." If then we can determine what the law requires, we can determine what the transgression of it is; and if we can find what the transgression of it is, we can find what sin is. The law, we know, requires true love to God and man. True love is the fulfilling of the law. And true love consists in disinterested, impartial, universal benevolence. The transgression of the law, therefore, must essentially consist in something which is directly opposite to such pure, holy love. And there is nothing in nature more directly opposite to perfectly disinterested love, than interested love, or selfishness. So that all sin consists in the free, voluntary exercise of selfishness. As true love is a free, voluntary exercise of a moral agent, so false love is a free, voluntary exercise of a moral agent. And as a mere want of love is not obedience to the law, so a mere want of selfishness is not a transgression of the law. A mere want of any thing has no properties, either good or evil. It follows that nothing short of the positive exercise of true love is obedience to the law, and nothing short of the positive exercise of selfishness is a transgression of the law. There is, indeed, a distinction often made between internal and external obedience, and between internal and external disobedience. But this distinction is merely apparent and not real; for all real obedience is internal, and lies in the heart and not in the outward act. And so all real disobedience is internal, and lies in the heart and not in the outward act. This ought to be remembered, when we come to speak of the first sinful exercises which take place in the human heart. Having considered what sin is, I proceed to show,

II. When mankind become capable of sinning.

If sin be a free, voluntary, moral exercise, it must be supposed that they are not capable of sinning before they become moral agents. Here then it seems necessary to inquire what

mental powers and faculties are necessary to constitute a moral agent. Perception, memory and volition appear to be the essential powers or properties which constitute a free agent. Animals are free agents. They act freely and voluntarily in the view of motives. "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib." The ox has perception, volition and memory. The ox, as well as the ass, knows his master and his master's crib, and remembers where he was fed, and freely and voluntarily goes to the place he remembers, to be fed again. He is therefore a free, voluntary agent. But he is not a moral agent; for his perception, memory, and volition cannot give him a capacity to know what is right and what is wrong. He does not know that it is right to feed at his master's crib, and wrong to feed at another man's crib. No animals have any higher mental powers than perception, memory, and volition; and therefore they are not and cannot be made moral agents, at any period of their existence. But God has made man wiser than the beasts of the field and fowls of the air; and endued him not only with perception, reason, memory, and volition, but with a moral faculty to discern moral good and moral evil. This moral faculty is what we call conscience, by which we discover what is right and what is wrong in ourselves and others. The faculty itself has no moral excellence in it, and is called a moral rather than a mere natural faculty, because it enables us to distinguish moral actions or exercises from mere natural actions.

Having found what mental powers and faculties constitute a mere agent, and what mental powers and faculties constitute a moral agent, we may perhaps easily and certainly determine when a little animal becomes an agent, and when a little child becomes a moral agent, and capable of acting right or wrong. We know that a little lamb becomes an agent as soon as it possesses perception, memory and volition; for so soon we see it move and act freely and voluntarily in the view of motives or external objects. Why then do we not as certainly know that a little child becomes a moral agent as soon as it possesses perception, reason, conscience, memory and volition? And why must we not suppose that the little child becomes possessed of all the mental powers and faculties which constitute him a moral agent, as early as the little lamb becomes possessed of all the mental powers and faculties which constitute it a natural agent? We are obliged in both cases to judge by actions, and not by words. Does not the little child appear to move and act freely and voluntarily in the view of motives, long before it is capable of speaking? Why then may it not become a moral agent, as early as the little lamb becomes a natural agent? Or at least, why may it not become a moral

agent before it is capable of speaking? We know that a child discovers volition before it is capable of speaking; for it exercises choice, and prefers one thing to another. It chooses light rather than darkness, and to be with one person rather than another. It discovers memory before it can speak, and recollects what it has found to be agreeable to it. And it discovers reason and conscience before it can speak those words. For if it be unreasonably and unjustly corrected, it will manifest a sense of the injury it suffers by sighing and sobbing, rather than crying. If we may judge by analogy between little children and larger children, or between little children and those that are universally allowed to be moral agents, we must be inclined to believe that little children are moral agents before they are capable of uttering a single word.

The only objection against children's being so early moral agents is, that they have not knowledge enough to be moral agents. But who can tell how much knowledge they must have before they become moral agents? Every one will allow that a child seven years old is a moral agent, and capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong. Almost every body will allow that a child four years old is a moral agent, and capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong. And those who allow that a child four years old is a moral agent, and knows what is right and wrong, will generally allow that a child two years old is a moral agent, and knows what is right and what is wrong. And where shall we stop? Why may we not suppose that a child one year old, or half a year old, is a moral agent, and knows what is right and what is wrong, in some cases? It is not necessary that a child should know that there is a God, or that the Bible is his word, in order to know that it is right to obey its parents, and wrong to disobey them; or that it is right for one child to have its own playthings, and wrong for another to take them away without its consent. The bare light of nature, or the dictates of conscience are sufficient to teach little children what is right and what is wrong in the cases that have been mentioned, and in a multitude of other similar cases. If children do not become moral agents as soon as they possess and exercise the mental powers and faculties which render them capable of moral agency, we can never know when they do become moral agents. They are men in miniature, and not mere animals. Their free, voluntary exercises and actions are moral exercises and actions, and are essentially different from the free and voluntary actions of a young lamb, or any other young animal which is destitute of conscience, or a faculty of distinguishing between moral good and evil. But that they do sin as soon as they are capa-

ble of sinning is a point still to be proved. Accordingly, I proceed to show,

III. That they do sin as soon as they become capable of sinning.

As soon as they become capable of exercising selfishness, they become capable of exercising benevolence; or, as soon as they become capable of exercising morally good, they are capable of exercising morally evil affections. Their first moral exercises must be either morally sinful or morally good. For as soon as they possess those mental powers and faculties which render them capable of moral agency, they must act in the view of the objects they perceive, and either love or hate them, in a sinful or holy manner. They must act as moral agents; and their first free and voluntary exercises must be either morally good or morally evil. There is certainly a time when they begin to act as moral agents; and the question now before us is, whether at that time they always begin to sin.

Now, so far as we can derive any evidence from observation on this subject, we must conclude that they begin to sin as soon as they become moral agents, or as soon as it is possible for them to begin to sin. They certainly discover as early as possible, impatience, obstinacy and revenge, which are sinful exercises in any moral agent that can distinguish between right and wrong. And that children, before they can speak or walk, do know that these are evil exercises, appears from their conduct when they are corrected for them. Correction directly tends to restrain and still them. They appear differently under just and unjust correction; which is a presumptive evidence that they discern the moral difference between deserved and undeserved corrections. We not only early discover impatience, obstinacy and revenge in children, but real selfishness, which is the essence of all sin. How soon do they begin to covet each other's property, and display art, deception and falsehood, to obtain it unjustly! Does not such conduct indicate that they act wrong as soon as they are capable of acting wrong? These appearances of moral depravity in little children carry conviction to parents, who are partial in their favor. Where is there a parent who will not reprove or correct his children, so soon as they discover their selfishness in coveting and fraudulently taking what is not their own? And if it carries this evidence to parents, why should it not carry still stronger conviction to all other critical and impartial observers? Observation, therefore, affords a strong presumptive evidence that children begin to sin as soon as they are moral agents, or are capable of sinning.

The testimony of observation on this subject is strengthened

at least, by the testimony of experience. Every person in the world is conscious of sinning, and of sinning as long ago as he can remember. He has, therefore, as strong an evidence as he can have, from his own experience, that he began to sin as early as he became a moral agent, or capable of sinning. Every person has the evidence of experience that he began to sin as early as possible, and has no experimental evidence to the contrary. The evidence of experience, therefore, corroborates the evidence of observation, that children do begin to sin as soon as they are capable of sinning. So far as others have told them how they appeared and acted in childhood, and so far as they remember how they appeared and acted in childhood, they have strong presumptive evidence that they were by nature children of disobedience, and transgressors in infancy. And now, if we look into the Bible, we shall there find conclusive and infallible evidence that mankind do actually sin as soon as they become moral agents, and are capable of sinning. All the inspired writers bear united testimony to this melancholy truth. God says to every sinner in Zion, "I knew that thou wouldest deal treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." After God had swept away the wicked from the face of the earth, he "said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." David says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent." Seneca, a heathen philosopher, observes, that "serpents do not receive their poison when they bite, but they had it before, by nature." Again, David says of himself, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Though these passages of scripture are not to be understood literally, yet they undoubtedly mean that mankind begin to sin as soon as their rational nature renders them capable of sinning. When we say a serpent is naturally poisonous, we mean that it is poisonous as soon as its nature renders it capable of having poison. So when the inspired writers speak of men's sinning as soon as they be born, their expressions plainly imply that they are sinners by nature, or begin to sin as soon as they are capable of sinning. This same sentiment we find taught in more plain and literal terms, by Job. He emphatically asks, "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" This question carries in it a strong affirmation that mankind are naturally sinners, and always sin as soon as they become men in miniature, or moral agents. Solomon says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far

from him." This must mean moral folly, which lies in the heart; for the rod of correction cannot drive away the folly that lies in the understanding. The apostle tells the Ephesian converts, that they had been dead in trespasses and sins, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others; that is, even as all the rest of mankind were by nature.

These representations of the sinfulness and guilt of childhood are confirmed by God's providential treatment of children. Natural death has reigned over all mankind from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to this day. Death is a natural evil, and was threatened to mankind as a punishment for sin. When God inflicts death upon the human race, it indicates that they are guilty of sin. God has not threatened death to the animal creation, and therefore his inflicting death upon them does not indicate that he punishes them for sin. But the apostle represents death as a punishment inflicted upon the children of men. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." According to the calculation of some, one half of mankind die before they are eight years old. We know, however, that God inflicts death upon the aged and the young without any discrimination. He destroyed the children in Sodom, though he declared he would not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Thus it appears from observation and experience, and from scripture declarations and facts, that men begin to sin as soon as they become moral agents, and are capable of sinning. It only remains to show,

IV. Why they always have sinful before they have holy exercises.

Whenever they become moral agents, and capable of exercising sinful affections, they at that time become capable of exercising holy affections. But it appears from what has been said, that they always have sinful, before they have any holy exercises. If this were not true, they would not be by nature depraved, any more than Adam was before he lost the moral image of God. I know, some suppose that they do have holy affections before they have sinful ones. But I shall now take it for granted that it has been proved that their first moral exercises are sinful and not holy. And on this supposition, the question now to be answered is, Why do they begin to sin before they ever begin to be holy?

Here it is evident, that it is not because they are not as capable of exercising holy affections, as unholy and sinful ones. Nor is it because they have derived a corrupt and sinful nature from Adam, which is prior to, and the cause of, their sinful exercises. I know this is often supposed; but the supposition

is absurd. For it is impossible to conceive of a corrupt and sinful nature prior to, and distinct from, corrupt and sinful exercises. Sin is a free, voluntary exercise, which cannot be transferred from one person to another. Men do not, therefore, begin to sin before they begin to be holy, because they derived a corrupt and sinful nature from Adam. Nor do they begin to sin before they begin to be holy, because they have a self determining power. This is generally supposed by those who deny native depravity. They suppose that mankind are not moral agents as soon as they come into the world; and that during the interval of time from their coming into the world until they become moral agents, be that term longer or shorter, they suppose they are no more inclined to evil than to good. But they suppose that as soon as they become moral agents, they possess a self determining power, which is essential to moral agency. By this power they mean a self-sufficient, independent power to produce their own free and voluntary exercises. And they suppose that as soon as children become moral agents, they exercise their self-determining power, and actually begin to choose good before they begin to choose evil. But there is nothing in reason or scripture, to support this mode of accounting for the native innocence of children. For it can be demonstrated by reason, that children do not possess a self determining power when they become moral agents. And it has been, perhaps, sufficiently proved that children always begin to choose evil before they begin to choose good.

The question then still returns, Why do they as soon as they become moral agents, always choose evil, before they choose good? I can give no better reason than this. God appointed Adam to be the public head of his posterity; and determined, in case of his disobedience, that they should begin to sin before they should begin to be holy. This determination God has executed, by directly operating on the hearts of children when they first become moral agents. The native depravity of all mankind comes in this way, in consequence of Adam's first sin. This representation is confirmed by the express declaration of the apostle. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Though men have sought out many inventions to account for the native depravity of the human race, yet there appears no other way than this which has been mentioned, to account for it agreeably to reason and scripture.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the native depravity of children consists in having free, voluntary, sinful affections, as soon as they become moral

agents, and before they have any holy exercises, then the scriptural doctrine of native depravity has nothing in it absurd or unreasonable. Those who disbelieve and deny the native depravity of children, always deny it on the ground of absurdity. But if they do not become depraved before they become moral agents, where is the absurdity of their having free, voluntary, sinful exercises at that time, any more than at any other period of their lives? Upon their own principle, whenever children become moral agents, let that time be when it will, they are then capable of choosing either good or evil; and there is no more absurdity in the idea of the choosing evil first, than of their choosing good first. It is just as difficult for those who maintain that children exercise free, voluntary, holy affections at first, to account for their having holy exercises before they have sinful, as it is for those who maintain that children have free, voluntary, sinful exercises at first, to account for their having free, voluntary, sinful exercises before they have holy. Both those who deny, and those who maintain, native depravity, allow, that children do not become morally depraved before they become moral agents. And after they become moral agents, both allow that they are capable of having either good or bad moral exercises. There is no absurdity in either of these opinions. If God had determined, notwithstanding Adam's apostacy, that his posterity should begin to be holy as soon as they become moral agents, there would be no absurdity in supposing that they actually do begin to be holy before they begin to be sinful. And since it appears that God has determined, in consequence of Adam's apostacy, that his posterity shall begin to be sinful as soon as they become moral agents, there is no absurdity in believing and maintaining that they do begin to be sinful before they begin to be holy. There can be no solid objection against native depravity, drawn from reason or scripture; but there can be, as we have seen, solid arguments in favor of native depravity drawn from scripture, reason, observation and experience. If those who deny the doctrine of native depravity would maintain their opinion, they must prove that native depravity is inconsistent with free agency, or that it is contrary to scripture and the universal observation and experience of mankind. But this it is believed they never have done, and never can do. For the doctrine of native depravity has been constantly maintained among the great majority of those who have called themselves, and have been called, orthodox christians, from the days of the apostles to this day; notwithstanding all the genius, learning and criticism, which have been employed to refute this scriptural doctrine. The subject is extremely interesting, both in a theoretical and

practical view; and it deeply concerns every individual to understand and approve the truth, in respect to his moral state by nature.

2. It appears from what has been said concerning native depravity, that if children die before they become moral agents, it is most rational to conclude that they are annihilated. As they are totally destitute of moral exercises which are either virtuous or sinful, they do not appear to be proper subjects of praise or blame, reward or punishment. It is certainly supposable that children may exist in this world some space of time, before they become moral agents; but how long that space may be, whether an hour, a day, a month, or a year, or several years, as many suppose, we do not presume to determine. But during that space, whether longer or shorter, they are not moral agents, nor consequently accountable creatures in the sight of God or man. It is rational to conclude, therefore, that God will not treat them as accountable creatures, nor reward or punish them. Of course, we must conclude that they will be annihilated. This was the opinion of Dr. Watts, and it seems to be well founded.*

3. If any children are saved who die soon after they become moral agents, they are undoubtedly regenerated before they are taken out of the world. They stand in the same relation to and connection with Adam, that the rest of mankind do, and become sinful before they become holy, in consequence of his apostacy. And for this reason they need to be renewed and sanctified, as well as adult persons, in order to be qualified for the enjoyments and employments of heaven. As they are moral agents, they are capable of having holy, after they have had unholy affections; and God is able to produce holy, as well as unholy, affections in their heart. If he sanctified Jeremiah and John the Baptist from the womb, or as early as they needed to be and could be sanctified, then he is able to sanctify those young children who die soon after they become moral agents, before he takes them out of the world and conducts them to heaven, if he ever does save such. He has not been pleased

* The author does not mean to say, nor does he say, that *he* believes any infants are annihilated. Some have supposed, and Dr. Watts was of the number, that infants live a certain time before they become moral agents. This supposition being *admitted as true*, the rational conclusion is, that, dying before they become moral agents, they are annihilated. Those who do believe that infants live any time as "mere animals," and not "men in miniature," must, to be consistent with themselves, believe that those who die *during this time* are annihilated. This is all the author expresses in this inference. His own belief is, as clearly expressed in the body of the discourse, that they become *moral* agents as soon as they become *natural* agents. This note was written before the author's death, and shown to him, and is now added in accordance with a request which he then made.—Ed.

to inform us expressly whether he does renew the hearts of the whole, or a part, or none, of those little children who die soon after they become moral agents. As they then become morally depraved, it is plain that, in point of justice, he may then leave them all to perish in their native depravity and guilt. Or in mercy, he may renew them all. But from all the light we can find in scripture on this subject, it seems to be the most probable opinion that he renews only some of those who die soon after they become morally depraved and guilty. He has indeed given some encouragements, or conditional promises, to believing parents, that he will renew and save their children if they die soon after they have become sinners. But they must be left in his holy, sovereign and merciful hands.

4. If children are by nature depraved, then they are by nature children of wrath; and if any of them are saved, they must be saved through the atonement of Christ, as well as any other sinners. They have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. They justly deserve eternal death for their first sinful exercises; and God cannot consistently pardon them on any other ground than the atonement of Christ. Christ, by his sufferings and death on the cross, tasted death for every man, and made atonement for the sins of the whole world. So that God can now consistently forgive or justify every one that is born of the Spirit, and has become holy. Hence says the apostle, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." As soon as the youngest sinner is born of God, he is a new creature, has a new nature, and is a child of God. Though he cannot exercise repentance towards God, nor faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet he may exercise true benevolence, which is true holiness; and God may pardon and save him through the atonement of Christ, on the condition of benevolence as well as on the condition of repentance or faith, or any other exercise of holiness. There is reason to think that many persons were saved before the gospel day, who had no distinct knowledge of Christ, or faith in him. Their hearts indeed were changed, and they loved and obeyed the God of Israel, and believed that an atonement for sin would be made, but had little or no knowledge of him by whom the atonement would be made. God saw Christ as a lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, and for his sake he pardoned all whom he saved before his incarnation and death. And just so he may pardon little children whom he renews and causes to exercise holy affections, though they are ignorant of him and of Christ, for whose sake he forgives and admits them to heaven. It is sufficient for God to know that he pardons and saves them on

the ground of Christ's atonement; and when they arrive in heaven, they will love and trust in Christ as their only Saviour.

5. If all mankind are depraved by nature, then the doctrine of native depravity is a primary and fundamental doctrine of the gospel. It was solely because God saw all mankind in a depraved, guilty, and perishing condition, that he formed the plan of redemption, and provided a Saviour for them. Christ said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." To execute this gracious design, Christ declares, that he came to seek and save them that are lost. According to these infallible declarations, the native depravity of mankind lies at the foundation of Christianity. It is as necessary to believe this doctrine, as to believe the gospel; and it is as important to maintain this doctrine, as to maintain the gospel. If any one doctrine of the gospel may be said to be more fundamental, essential, and important than any other, it is the doctrine of *the native depravity of all mankind*, without a single exception. In this important light it has been viewed, believed, and defended, in every age of the christian church. And it is as important now as it ever was, to believe, to approve, and to defend, this humiliating doctrine. For the denial of it directly tends to corrupt the hearts and destroy the souls of men, and to subvert every other fundamental doctrine of the gospel. It is well known that there is a tendency in those who deny the doctrine of the native depravity of all mankind, to deny the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of eternal punishment, and the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. When all these doctrines are expunged from the gospel, is there one peculiar, or essential doctrine left? I would not be understood to assert that every one who denies the doctrine of native depravity runs all these lengths in error. Some are not capable of seeing the connection between one error and another. Some are too indolent to trace the connection. And some stop short, through fear of plunging into the abyss of gross infidelity. But this is no evidence that the denial of native depravity does not naturally tend to lead men into all the fatal errors which have been mentioned. It is extremely important, therefore, that the doctrine of native depravity should be plainly taught, properly explained, and firmly supported, to guard men against an approximation towards the errors which are zealously propagated by those who lie in wait to deceive and destroy. It is one evidence of native depravity, that mankind so generally love error better

than truth. This led Christ to tell those who rejected the doctrines he taught, "Ye me believe not, because I tell you the truth."

6. If all men are by nature depraved, then all sinners are in a very guilty and dangerous condition. They have always been totally destitute of the least degree of true holiness. They have never had the love of God in them, nor ever exercised one right affection towards him, or any other object; but every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts has been evil, only evil continually. They began to sin as soon as they were capable of sinning, and have continued sinning without interruption through every day and period of their lives. Their sins have been increasing from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, in number, magnitude and aggravation. For they have misimproved and abused their time, their talents, their interests, their influence, and all the means and opportunities they have enjoyed of doing and getting good. All these evil things have flowed from the plague of their hearts, or native depravity. God has been justly angry with them every day, and his wrath still abides upon them; yet nevertheless they rush on "the thick bosses of his bucklers." It is certainly of the Lord's mercies that they have not been consumed. He has always been able to destroy them, while he has been waiting to be gracious to them. Have they not great reason to fear that his patience is nearly exhausted, and that there is but a step between them and temporal and eternal death? There is nothing but their criminal stupidity that now prevents their seeing and realizing their guilty and deplorable condition. This stupidity would be immediately removed, if they would only show themselves men, turn off their eyes from beholding vanities, and look at the plague of their own hearts, and the dreadful effects which have flowed from it, through the whole course of their past lives. Why then do they not look into their own hearts, and realize their guilty and perishing condition? The guilty cause is their native depravity, which blinds their understanding and sears their conscience. But,

7. It appears from what has been said concerning their native depravity, that it affords no excuse for their past transgressions, and is no obstacle in the way of their immediately performing the gracious and condescending conditions of salvation. Their native depravity does not consist in any corrupt nature or dormant principle entailed upon them by Adam, without their knowledge, desire, or consent; but it consists in their own free, voluntary exercises of selfishness, which is the essence of their criminality, and admits of no excuse. They did not begin to sin before they became free, moral agents.

Their first sinful exercises were as really criminal, as any of their past sinful exercises. They began to sin freely and voluntarily, as Adam did at first; and they have always continued to sin freely and voluntarily. The reason why they have not always loved God is, because they have hated him without a cause. The reason why they have not come to Christ is, because they *would* not come to him that they might have life. Such free, voluntary enmity to God and to Christ is unspeakably criminal, and admits of no excuse; and is the very thing for which they deserve eternal death. And of course, it lays them under no natural inability to love God supremely, or to believe in Christ immediately. They can act as freely in loving as in hating God, and in believing in Christ as in rejecting him. They have no excuse for neglecting to do their first work till a more convenient season. God now commands every one who is in the state of nature to put away his native depravity and immediately comply with the terms of mercy which he has proposed in the gospel. He does not allow him to plead his old, obstinate heart as an excuse; but requires him to put off the old man and put on the new, and walk in newness of life the residue of his days. Life and death are now set before every one, and his free choice must determine his eternal destiny.

I must not conclude this discourse, without applying it to parents in particular, who are deeply concerned in it, not merely on their own account, but more especially on account of their children. These are committed to their peculiar care and instruction. Notwithstanding their children have so many amiable natural qualities which excite their fondest affections, yet they are by nature depraved, and children of wrath. Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil, and as soon as possible they go astray, speaking and acting wrong. They carry about with them evil hearts, which expose them to run into the paths of the destroyer, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. And it depends, under God, upon parents, whether they shall avoid every evil and false way, and pursue the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. You do, in a very important sense, hold the temporal and eternal interests of your children in your own hands. And can you bear the thought that they should perish for ever, through your guilty negligence? God has required you to give up your children to him, and bring them up for him. It never more concerned parents to instruct and restrain their children faithfully than at this day. All the duties of parents are very closely connected; but there seems to be a more visible connection between the happiness of parents and their duty towards their

children, than in respect to almost any other duty. If you neglect your duty to your children, your children will very probably correct you for your neglect in ways that will pierce your hearts with the keenest sorrow and anguish. But have you any reason to expect that you shall take proper care of your children, if you do not take proper care of yourselves? You must give God your hearts, before you can give your children to him, or expect that he will teach you how to teach them. Will you, for a moment, anticipate the tremendous consequences of neglecting yourselves and your children? Be entreated to avoid those tremendous consequences, and resolve to do all in your power to prepare yourselves and your children for the kingdom of glory.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE NATURE, EXTENT AND INFLUENCE OF THE MORAL DEPRAVITY OF SINNERS.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. — Romans, viii. 7, 8.

It has been much disputed of late, among those who call themselves Calvinists, whether all the doings of unregenerate men are altogether sinful. There would be no difficulty in deciding this question, if those who profess to believe the total corruption of human nature would only agree to draw the same inference from it. But there are many who acknowledge that the hearts of sinners are totally depraved, and yet deny that their actions are altogether criminal. It seems necessary, therefore, in order to bring this point to a fair and final decision, not only to prove that sinners are totally depraved, but also to prove that their total depravity extends to all their actions, and turns them into sin. And the words which I have read naturally lead us to consider this subject in this manner. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." By the carnal mind the apostle means the carnal heart; for it is the heart only, which is enmity against God. And this carnal heart he represents as corrupting all the actions which proceed from it. He lays down the total depravity of sinners as a first principle, from which he draws the only fair and natural conclusion, that they cannot please God. His plain meaning, therefore, may be clearly expressed in this simple proposition:

The total depravity of sinners renders all their actions totally depraved.

To illustrate this subject, I shall show,

I. That sinners are totally depraved: And,

II. That their total depravity totally depraves all their actions.

I. I am to show that sinners are totally depraved.

There is no truth more clearly and fully taught in scripture, than the total depravity of sinners. They are represented as spiritually *deaf* and *blind*. "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see." They are represented as spiritually *dead*. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." They are represented as incapable of discerning the moral beauty of divine objects. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These are plain though figurative descriptions of the total depravity of sinners. Their hearts are also represented as not only destitute of moral goodness, but as full of moral evil. We read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Solomon says, "The heart of the sons of men is *full* of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Our Lord told the unbelieving Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The apostle Paul paints the total depravity of sinners in the strongest colors. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes." Agreeably to these representations, we find such appellations and epithets given to sinners as strongly express their total depravity. They are called *the unjust, the unrighteous, the ungodly, the unholy, the unbelieving*, and *enemies of the cross of Christ*. Such persons as justly deserve these characters, must be entirely destitute of every holy and virtuous affection.

But the manner in which the scripture distinguishes saints from sinners, affords the clearest and most convincing evidence, that all who are not saints are totally depraved. According to scripture, he that loveth God is a saint, but he that loveth him not is a sinner; he that repenteth of sin is a saint, but he that repenteth not is a sinner; he that believeth in Christ is a saint, but he that believeth not is a sinner; he that is born of God is a saint, but he that is not born of God is a sinner; he that is in the Spirit is a saint, but he that is in the flesh is a sinner; he that is *for* Christ is a saint, but he that is *against* him is a sinner. This mode of distinction necessarily implies that saints have some grace, but that sinners have none; that saints have some holiness, but that sinners have none; and that nothing short of total depravity can justly denominate any person a sinner in distinction from a saint. Though the plainest passages of scripture in favor of total depravity may be perverted to some other meaning, yet the argument in favor of this doctrine, drawn from the scriptural manner of distinguishing saints from sinners, admits of no evasion, and cannot be rejected without rejecting the very distinction itself. Whoever undertakes to describe a sinner without taking total depravity into his character, will describe a saint. If he say, a sinner is one who sometimes does good, and sometimes does evil; this is a description of a saint. For every saint sometimes does good and sometimes does evil. If he say, a sinner is one who does more evil than good; this is a description of a saint. For every saint has more sin than holiness. If he say, a sinner is one who has the lowest degree of grace; this is a description of a saint. For the least degree of love, faith, repentance, or any other holy affection, forms the character of a saint, and entitles him to the divine favor. Indeed, ask any intelligent, frank, candid man, who denies total depravity, to tell you the essential difference between a saint and a sinner, and he will freely acknowledge that it is out of his power. For he knows, that if all men are possessed of some real holiness, the only moral difference between one person and another is, that one has more and another has less true love to God. But this is the difference between one saint and another, and not the difference between a saint and a sinner. The most celebrated writers, who deny total depravity, appear to be unable to point out any essential difference between saints and sinners. We may read all the sermons of Barrow, Clarke, Hoadley and Tillotson, and never find a single instance in which they have drawn two essentially different moral characters. They speak of saints and sinners in scripture language; but they never show wherein they essentially differ, nor describe that particular act or exercise of mind, by which a

sinner becomes a saint. Hence it appears from fact, as well as from scripture, that it is impossible to point out any essential moral difference between a sinner and a saint, without making total depravity the peculiar and essential character of a sinner. If there be any such persons in the world, therefore, as justly deserve to be called sinners, in distinction from saints, they are totally depraved, and wholly under the dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. The way is now prepared to show,

II. That the total depravity of sinners totally defiles and depraves all their actions.

Their total depravity is of a moral nature, and entirely distinct from their intellectual powers. They can perceive as well, they can remember as well, they can reason as well, and they can distinguish between moral good and evil as well, as the best of saints. The total depravity of their natural faculties would entirely destroy their *moral* depravity. For were their reason and conscience totally depraved, they would be altogether incapable of doing right or wrong, or performing any moral action which should be either pleasing or displeasing to God. Their moral depravity, therefore, must consist in their hearts. And this is agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture. The apostle tells us, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." As enmity belongs to the heart, and not to the understanding, so the heart must be the seat of moral corruption. Solomon says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." By foolishness here he means moral depravity; and this he places in the heart. God promises to renew the hearts of sinners, in order to remove their moral depravity. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." If the removal of an evil heart will take away total depravity, then total depravity certainly consists in an evil heart. When God would portray the depravity of sinners in the strongest colors, he says, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." So when Christ would express the depravity and guilt of the Jews in the highest degree, he says, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Paul also represents the very essence of sin, or moral depravity, as consisting in the opposition of the heart to the light of conscience. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." And this every sinner knows to be true by his own experience. He finds that his heart is not only distinct from his conscience, but

is in direct opposition to it. His conscience tells him to do what his heart hates and opposes; and on the other hand, his heart inclines him to do what his conscience forbids and condemns. It appears from scripture and experience, therefore, that the heart is the only seat of moral depravity. There is no other place in the mind where it can be found, nor where it can possibly exist.

Now if sinners are totally depraved, and their total depravity lies in the heart, then the apostle's reasoning is plain and conclusive. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." A corrupt heart necessarily corrupts all the actions which proceed from it. And since sinners always act from a corrupt heart, all their actions must be corrupt. The only way to prove any action to be criminal, is to prove that it was done from a wicked heart. Why is murder a crime? No other reason can be given but that it necessarily flows from malice prepense. Why are all the actions of the devil criminal? No other reason can be given but that he always acts from a malevolent heart. If sinners, therefore, have a totally depraved heart, which is enmity against God, and if they always act from this malevolent heart, then it necessarily follows that all their actions are sinful, and displeasing to him who knows from what source they proceed. There is no way to evade the force of this reasoning, but only to deny that all the actions of sinners flow from the heart. And since some have presumed to deny this plain and important truth, I will endeavor to demonstrate it. Here I would observe,

1. The scripture represents all human actions as flowing from the heart. We are told that Abraham was required to sacrifice his son, and that he obeyed the divine command. But we know that his obedience wholly consisted in the intention of his heart. David is represented as doing well, while it was only in his heart to build the house of the Lord. This Solomon expressly declares. "And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart." And Judas acted from the heart in betraying Christ. For Satan put it into his heart to betray him. That is, Satan suggested the temptation, and Judas in his heart complied with it. These, and numerous other instances which might be collected from scripture, clearly show that all human actions originate in and flow from the heart.

Our Saviour taught this doctrine in the plainest and strongest terms. "O generation of vipers; how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart

bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Christ insisted much upon this point in opposition to the Pharisees, who were fond of separating actions from the heart. He addressed them in this pointed language: "Ye hypocrites! well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." He then spake a parable to illustrate this declaration. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." This parable having offended the Pharisees, Peter desired Christ to explain it. Accordingly he replied and said, "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the *heart*, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man." Our Lord here plainly asserts that all human actions proceed from the heart; and he conveys the same sentiment in his exposition of the divine law. "When the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence — one of them which was a lawyer asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It is easy to see the truth and propriety of this exposition, if all the actions of men flow from the heart. For if this be true, then the commands to read and pray, to labor six days in the week and sanctify the seventh, and to perform all other virtuous and holy actions, are necessarily comprised in the law of love. By requiring a good heart, God virtually requires all good actions, and virtually forbids all bad actions. So the apostle reasons upon the subject. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this," that is, for this reason, "Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his

neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." This text plainly teaches that the law requires love, because love will produce all good actions, and prevent all bad ones; or in other words, that the law requires a good heart, because all good actions will flow from it; and forbids a bad heart, because all bad actions will flow from it. Thus it appears from scripture precepts and prohibitions, as well as from scripture representations and declarations, that all human actions flow from the heart. And to make it appear that we have given the true sense of scripture upon this point, and still farther to establish it, I may observe,

2. That moral agency wholly consists in the heart, and therefore every moral action must necessarily flow from this, and no other source.

The heart consists in voluntary exercises; and voluntary exercises are moral agency. Willing is acting. Willing right is acting right; and willing wrong is acting wrong. All voluntary exercises belong to the heart; and therefore loving and hating is as really acting, as choosing and refusing. It is true, we sometimes make a distinction among the exercises of the heart; and call some affections, and others volitions. But the only ground of this distinction is, that loving and hating, which we call affections, are immanent exercises of the heart which produce no external effects; whereas choosing and refusing, which we call volitions, are imperative acts of the will, and productive of external actions. Moral agency, however, equally belongs to the heart and the will, or to both affections and volitions. For we act when we love, whether we express our love or not. And we act when we hate, whether we express our hatred or not. There is as much moral agency in the affections of the heart, as in the volitions of the will. The heart and will are essentially the same; or, the will is only the heart producing external effects. So that strictly speaking, all moral agency belongs to the heart, as distinguished from all the other powers and faculties of the mind. The truth of this we all know by our own experience. No man feels that any motion of body or mind is his action, unless his heart is concerned in it. If his eye or head, or hand, or foot, should move without the concurrence of his heart, he would not call that motion his action, nor feel in the least degree accountable for it. Or if his intellectual powers were put in motion without the choice of his heart, he would not call those mental motions his actions, nor feel either praise or blame worthy for them. No exercises of body or mind have any moral quality without the heart. There is no moral good nor moral evil in thoughts, only as the heart approves or disapproves them. There is no moral good nor moral evil

in words, only as the heart approves or disapproves them. There is no moral good nor moral evil in reading, walking or laboring, only as the heart approves or disapproves these outward exertions. The reason is, all thoughts, words and outward exertions are not actions, but mere motions, without the heart. All moral agency consists in the heart. With the heart man loves, with the heart man hates, with the heart man chooses and refuses, with the heart man believes and disbelieves, and with the heart he does all that may be called his action. For without the heart, he is a mere passive machine, which may be acted upon, but which cannot act. And on this ground it is, that the law of God knows the heart only, requires the heart only, and forbids only the heart. "My son," saith God, "give me thine heart." And the apostle says, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." God requires and accepts a good heart, but forbids and rejects a bad one. The heart comprises all that he requires or forbids; because to require or forbid any exercise or action without the heart, would be the same as to require or forbid an act without an agent, which is palpably absurd. Now if sinners always act from the heart, and if the heart from which they act be totally depraved, then all their actions must be totally depraved. If there be no flaw in any link of this chain of reasoning, and if one link be inseparably connected with another, then it must bind every person to believe that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, wherein their mistake lies, who acknowledge the total depravity of sinners and yet deny their total sinfulness. Those who run into this inconsistency, have often been refuted without being convinced. But it is much to be desired that they should be convinced as well as refuted; and if the fallacy of their reasoning be fairly and clearly pointed out, perhaps they will be convinced. If the hearts of sinners be totally depraved, and all their actions proceed from their hearts, then all their actions must be totally depraved. This is too plain to be denied. Those, therefore, who deny that total sinfulness is the consequence of total depravity, deny that all the actions of sinners proceed from their hearts. And were this true, they might acknowledge total depravity, and yet deny total sinfulness, without the least inconsistency. Accordingly we find they make a distinction between actions which flow from the heart, and those which flow from reason, conscience, or natural affections. They acknowledge that the heart

is totally depraved, and all the actions which proceed from it; but they deny the total depravity of reason, conscience and natural affections, and therefore deny that the actions which proceed from these innocent principles are totally sinful. They say, sinners sometimes act only from their heart, sometimes only from their conscience, and sometimes only from their natural affections. And when they act only from the heart, which is totally corrupt, then their actions are entirely sinful. But when they act from the harmless principles of reason, conscience and natural affections, then their actions are altogether innocent and acceptable to God. Now when they say this, they say something of which others are as capable of judging as themselves.

I now appeal to every person, whether he is *conscious* of ever acting from mere reason, or from mere conscience, or from mere natural affections, *without the heart.* I presume no person can say that he is conscious of ever acting from any of these natural principles, without the heart. I appeal to every person again, whether he is conscious of ever acting from these natural principles, *contrary* to the heart. I presume no person can say that he is conscious of ever acting from these natural principles, contrary to the heart. I appeal to every person once more, whether he is not conscious of often acting contrary to reason, contrary to conscience, and contrary to natural affections. I presume every person can say that he is conscious of often acting contrary to all these natural principles. But how can these be principles of action, if we never act from them, and often act against them? The heart is a principle of action, and therefore we cannot act against it. And were reason, conscience, and natural affections, principles of action, we could no more act against these, than against the heart. Hence it evidently follows, that reason, conscience, and natural affections are no principles of action, but only motives of action. It is acknowledged that they often operate as motives which influence the heart, the only proper principle of action. If reason dictate to a man that it is best to be temperate, his reason is not the principle of action, but his heart, which acts agreeably to the motive suggested by reason. If conscience dictate to a man that it is his duty to observe the Sabbath, his conscience is not the principle of action, but his heart, which acts agreeably to the motive suggested by conscience. Or if natural affection dictate to a man to give a beloved child the largest portion of his inheritance, his natural affection is not the principle of action, but his heart, which acts agreeably to his natural affection. Now if reason, conscience, and natural affection be not principles of action, then no action can flow from them, but every action must flow from the heart. And if all actions flow from the heart, then

either all the actions of sinners are totally corrupt, or none of them. But all who acknowledge the total depravity of sinners, allow that those actions which flow from the heart are totally corrupt. Since then all the actions of sinners do in fact flow from the heart, and can flow from no other principle, all who admit the doctrine of total depravity, must, in order to be consistent, acknowledge that all the actions of sinners are totally depraved. If they admit the apostle's premises, they must adopt his conclusion, that they that are in the flesh, and act entirely from a carnal heart, cannot please God.

2. If it be a truth that sinners are totally depraved, then it is a very important truth. The doctrine of total depravity holds a distinguished place among the doctrines of the gospel. It lies at the foundation of some of the principal articles of Christianity. And were christians agreed in this great truth, they would soon put an end to many of their religious disputes. They would no longer contend about the character and conduct of sinners. They would no longer contend about the nature and necessity of regeneration. They would no longer contend about common and special grace. They would no longer contend about the terms of justification. They would no longer contend about the proper qualifications for communion at the table of the Lord. Nor would they any longer contend about universal salvation. For divine sovereignty in the dispensations of grace naturally results from the doctrine of total depravity. So that total depravity is not an unmeaning phrase, but a most solemn and important truth, which is inseparably connected with the leading and fundamental doctrines of the christian religion.

3. We learn from what has been said, that the total depravity of sinners does not destroy nor diminish their obligation to obey the divine commands. It appears that their total depravity consists wholly in the corruption of their hearts. Their intellectual faculties remain uncorrupt. Their perception, reason, and conscience, are in their full strength and vigor. And these are the sole ground of moral obligation. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Satan knows to do good, notwithstanding the total corruption of his heart, and therefore he is under the same obligation that he ever was, to love and obey his Maker. And since the total depravity of sinners does not destroy their knowledge of duty, it does not destroy their obligation to perform it. Moral obligation does not depend in the least degree upon the disposition of the heart. Whether men have good or bad hearts, they are equally obliged to love and serve their Creator. Accordingly God never makes the least allowance for the corruption of their hearts, in any of his precepts and prohibitions. Though he knew that the Is-

raelites in general were totally depraved when he gave the law at Mount Sinai, yet he required them to love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, upon pain of eternal destruction. And though Christ knew that the Jews were of their father the devil, and totally depraved, yet he required them to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect. The divine commands fall with all their weight and authority upon the consciences of sinners. Their depravity of heart lessens not their obligation to obedience. They have as much to do as other men. They have to obey all the commands in the Bible. They have to read and pray, and do every thing that good men have to do. The total corruption of their hearts will not afford them the least excuse for the least disaffection to God, nor for the least disobedience to any of his commands.

4. We learn from what has been said, why God condemns the best, as well as the worst actions of sinners. Every one can see a reason why God should condemn their open vices and immoralities; but many can see no reason why he should condemn their apparent love, obedience, and devotion. But we find he does, for some reason or other, condemn their best, as well as their worst actions, in the plainest and strongest terms. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." "I hate, I despise, your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts." Such sacrifices, prayers, and religious devotions of sinners, may be considered as their best performances; but these God expressly says he abhors and condemns. And the reason is plain and obvious. The best performances of sinners proceed from the same totally corrupt heart from which their open vices and immoralities proceed, and therefore are equally corrupt and sinful. When sinners come before God with a corrupt heart, they come at their peril; for God tells them that he never required them to come in such a manner. "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?" Yea, he forbids them to come and worship him with an unfriendly heart. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and

your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." God looketh not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He views the best actions of sinners as flowing from a totally corrupt heart, and therefore abhors and condemns them as altogether criminal.

5. We learn from what has been said, why none of the works of sinners will be accepted at the last day. Our Saviour, who will be the final Judge, has absolutely declared that he will condemn all sinners and all their works without distinction, in the great day of account. And though they may plead that they have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and done many deeds of apparent humanity and benevolence, yet he will reject and punish them for that criminal selfishness which was the source of all their actions. And this will be a sufficient reason for their everlasting perdition. If the hearts of all sinners are totally depraved, and if all their actions proceed from their totally corrupt hearts, then Christ may, with the greatest propriety, place them all at his left hand, and condemn all their actions when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. When the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, it will appear that the finally impenitent never had one right affection, nor one good intention, in the whole course of their lives. And when this appears, the whole universe must approve of Christ, in dooming them all to endless destruction.

6. We learn from what has been said, why the divine law, when it comes to the conscience, revives the guilt and destroys the hope of every sinner. Many sinners are so strict in their external conduct, and so serious and devout in their religious services, that they not only pacify their consciences, but even entertain high hopes of the favor of God and the enjoyment of heaven. But this is owing to their ignorance of the nature and extent of the divine law, and of the total corruption of their hearts. Whenever, therefore, the divine law is set home upon their consciences, it discovers the enmity of their hearts, and destroys all their hopes of heaven. This Paul found to be the case by his own experience. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it, slew me." Paul, before his conversion, was a man of a fair moral character, and zealous in the religion of his sect. His hopes of heaven were high, and he had no doubt of being a sincere friend to God. But when the commandment came, it discovered his heart, and

destroyed his hopes of the divine favor. He felt himself to be a poor, miserable, guilty sinner. He found that in him, that is, in his carnal mind, there dwelt no good thing. He was fully convinced that he had always acted from a carnal, selfish heart, which was unfriendly to God, and which justly deserved his everlasting displeasure. And if it be true that sinners always act from a carnal heart, which the law of God forbids, then the law of God, when it comes home to the conscience, must necessarily condemn them for all their thoughts, words and actions. And when they feel this conviction, there is nothing which can keep them from complete despair, but a belief that a holy, gracious and sovereign God can subdue their enmity, and save them in spite of their hearts.

7. We learn from what has been said, that it is the immediate duty of sinners to become reconciled to God. This is their first and most important duty. Their reading and praying, their seeking and striving, and every thing they do, will be displeasing to God, until they become heartily reconciled to his holy and amiable character. God is not only supremely glorious and excellent in his own nature, but he has always treated sinners with the greatest kindness and tenderness. He has never said any thing in his word, nor done any thing in his providence, which has ever given them any just ground for their disaffection. And, therefore, he solemnly calls upon them to impeach him for a single instance of his conduct, if they can. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." Since sinners have always hated God without a cause, it is their immediate duty to renounce their groundless enmity, and become reconciled to their kind and gracious Creator. Hence the sacred teachers unitedly exhort them to immediate holiness and reconciliation of heart to God. Isaiah says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Ezekiel says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" And the apostle Paul calls upon the enemies of God in the most solemn and endearing manner, to become immediately friendly to him. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, *Be ye reconciled to God.*" Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

NATURE OF SIN.

For sin is the transgression of the law. — 1 John, iii. 4.

The whole verse is this: "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

Taking the text as an independent declaration, I shall,

I. Consider what law is here meant;

II. What this law requires: and,

III. What this law forbids.

I. Let us consider what law the apostle mentions in the text. God has given a great many laws to mankind at different times. He gave a positive law to Adam, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to keep the Sabbath. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to labor and cultivate the earth. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to offer vicarious sacrifices to make atonement for sin. He gave a positive law to Noah, forbidding him to commit murder. Afterwards he gave a code of laws to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses. This code of laws comprised the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the civil law. The question now is, which of all these divine laws does the apostle mean in the text? There is no reason to think that he means any law given to Adam, or any law given to Noah, or any law given by Moses, except the moral law, which is founded in the reason of things, and is of perpetual obligation. This he calls the law, in distinction from all positive laws and particular precepts. By the law, therefore, he means the first supreme and universal law of God's moral kingdom, which is

binding upon all rational and accountable creatures. The apostle John means the same law that the apostle Paul meant, when he said, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law by which both Jews and Gentiles stood condemned, could not be either the ceremonial or civil law given by Moses; for the Gentiles were never under either of those laws; consequently it must mean the moral law, in distinction from all other laws given under either the Mosaic or christian dispensation. Any mere positive law which God has given to any of his creatures, he has a right to abolish or repeal when a change of circumstances requires it; but the moral law he has no right to abolish or repeal under any change of circumstances, because it is founded in the immutable relation which he bears to his creatures and they bear to him. He must cease to be their Creator and they to be his creatures, before the obligation of the moral law can cease to bind them. This appears to be true from plain, acknowledged facts. All the civil and ceremonial laws given by Moses have actually been superseded and abolished by the christian dispensation. This the apostle John knew; and therefore by the law in the text he could mean no other divine law but the moral law, which is as binding under the christian dispensation as ever it was under the Mosaic. I now proceed,

II. To consider what this moral law, which is binding upon all mankind, requires. It certainly requires something that is reasonable, because it is founded in reason; and it will appear to require what is reasonable, according to an infallible exposition of it, by an infallible judge. Our Saviour perfectly understood the true import and perpetual obligation of the law, and came to fulfil and magnify it. He said to his hearers in his sermon on the mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The Sadducees, who were enemies to the divine law, came to him on a certain occasion. "Then one of them, who was a lawyer," or Jewish teacher, "asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." According to this divine exposition of the divine

law, it requires all men to love God and one another; and implies that all who do love God and their fellow men perfectly, obey the law. And the apostle Paul gives the same exposition of the law. He says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." We have now found that the law requires love; and that love is the fulfilling of the law, or all that the law requires. But in order to determine the true meaning and import of the law, we must still farther inquire what kind of love the law requires. There are two kinds of love; selfish love, and benevolent love. Selfish love is interested love; but true benevolent love is disinterested love. It is most reasonable to suppose, that our Saviour means by love to God, supreme love to him; and by love to man, disinterested love to him. For no man can love God supremely from selfishness, nor his neighbor as himself from selfishness. Besides, we cannot suppose that Christ meant to say that the divine law requires selfish love to God and man; for he had before expressly condemned all selfish love to God and man. He said in his sermon on the mount, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect." Here it is evident that the love which God requires in his law is the same kind of love that he feels and expresses towards all mankind, which is a love of disinterested benevolence towards his enemies, as well as his friends. Selfishness disposes men to hate, and not to love their enemies. And if God were not possessed of pure, disinterested benevolence, he would not love those who hate him. No man's conscience approves of any love in himself, or in others, but what is disinterested. All holy, virtuous love is disinterested, whether it be holy benevolence, or holy complacency. Holy benevolence embraces all

mankind, whether they are holy or unholy; but holy complacency embraces none but those who appear to be holy. There are but two things really valuable and desirable in their own nature. One is happiness, and the other is holiness. Happiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. And holiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. The moral law, therefore, which is founded in the nature of things, requires men to love and seek holiness and happiness for themselves and others. It requires them to love and seek the holiness and blessedness of God supremely; because he is supremely great and good. And it requires men to love and seek one another's holiness and happiness as their own. And when they exercise such disinterested love to God and man, they fulfil the law, or do all that the law requires them to do. For while they feel disinterested love to God and man, they will spontaneously perform all those external actions which are a proper expression of love to God and man. That love to God which the divine law requires, will dispose those who possess it to read his word, call upon his name, remember his Sabbath, attend his ordinances, and employ their time, their talents, their property and influence, in his service. And that love which the divine law requires will dispose those who possess it to perform every external duty that they owe to their fellow men. The divine law which requires true love to God and man, virtually and necessarily requires all those external actions which are a proper expression of true love to God and man. For the law of God does not require any external actions, but such as naturally flow from love to God and man. Christ severely and pointedly condemned those who performed external acts of religion without love to God. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." God approves of no external conduct towards him, but what flows from pure disinterested love to him; and he approves of no external conduct towards men, but what flows from pure disinterested love to them. So that all that the divine law requires, may be summarily comprehended in pure, disinterested love to God and man. Having ascertained what the divine law requires, it remains to consider,

III. What it forbids. Every law has both a precept and prohibition. It forbids whatever is directly contrary to what it requires, and requires whatever is directly contrary to what it forbids. The law which requires men to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, forbids whatever is directly contrary to remembering and keeping the Sabbath properly. The law which says, "Thou shalt not kill," requires men to preserve their own lives and the lives of others. After we have ascertained what any law forbids, it is pretty easy to ascertain what it requires; and after we have ascertained what any law requires, it is pretty easy to ascertain what it forbids. It must forbid what is directly contrary to what it requires. It appears from what has been said under the last head, that the divine law requires disinterested love to God and man; and from this we may justly conclude that it forbids whatever is directly contrary to disinterested love to God and man. And what can be more directly contrary to disinterested love, than interested love? Or what can be more directly contrary to disinterested benevolence, than selfishness? The divine law, therefore, necessarily forbids all internal selfishness and all external expressions of it. Selfishness, and nothing but selfishness, is the transgression of the law of love. For selfishness, and nothing but selfishness, is sin; and nothing but sin is a transgression of the law. As disinterested love is the fulfilling of the law, so interested love is the transgression of the law. Selfishness is the only thing that the law forbids; and therefore the transgression of the law wholly consists in selfishness. This appears not only from the nature of the law and the nature of selfishness, but from the general representation of scripture. Paul says, "I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." He did not know what sin was, until he knew what was a transgression of the law; and he did not know what was a transgression of the law, until he knew that covetousness, which is selfishness, is a transgression of the law. As the law forbids selfishness, so selfishness must be a transgression of it. Again, the apostle says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But why cannot the carnal mind be subject to the law of God? No other reason can be given for it, but that the carnal mind consists in selfishness, which is a solid reason why it cannot be subject to the law of God; for it is impossible that selfishness should be obedience, or submission to the law that forbids it, as the divine law does. Again, the apostle represents selfishness as the source of all sin and iniquity. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blas-

phemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The love of self is here represented as the fruitful source of every species of disobedience to the divine law; and it must be so, because disobedience to it cannot spring from any other source. It must be here observed, that as the law requires no external actions but what flow from disinterested love, so the law forbids no external actions but what flow from selfishness. As love therefore is said to be the fulfilling of the law, so selfishness may as properly be said to be the full and entire transgression of the law. It is just as certain that the divine law forbids selfishness, as that it requires disinterested love; and it is just as certain that sin consists in selfishness, as that holiness consists in disinterested benevolence. And it must be universally allowed, that the divine law is an infallible standard of both holiness and sin.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the transgression of the divine law consists in positive selfishness, then it does not consist in a mere want of conformity to it. The Assembly of divines tell us that "sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God." The mere want of any thing is nothing. The mere want of conformity to the divine law is nothing; and nothing has no qualities, either good or bad. There is a want of conformity to the divine law in all material objects; but no praise or blame can be ascribed to them on that account. Their want of conformity is no transgression of the law of God. There is a want of conformity to the divine law in all the lower creation; but their want of conformity to it has no qualities, and is neither morally right nor wrong. And a mere want of conformity to the divine law has no qualities, and is neither sinful nor holy. A mere want of conformity to the divine law is no transgression of it. It is not any thing that is directly contrary to the disinterested love which the law requires. It is not any thing positive, but only negative. It is no more like selfishness, than benevolence. There is no more sin in the want of holiness, than there is holiness in the want of sin. Neither holiness nor sin can originate from a privative cause, which is really no cause at all. Whatever exists must have a positive cause of existence. If holiness exists, it must have a positive cause; and if sin exists, it must have a positive cause. And if sin consists in selfishness, it must have as positive a cause as holiness, which consists in benevolence.

Selfishness has as real and positive an existence as holiness, and requires as positive a cause of its existence as holiness. But it is universally allowed that holiness must have a positive cause of its existence; and it is generally allowed that God is the direct, immediate and efficient cause of its existence. No reason, then, can be given why so many maintain that sin consists in a mere want of conformity to the divine law, but a fear of allowing that it must have a cause, and that God must be that cause. To avoid the sentiment that God is the cause of moral evil, they are driven to suppose that moral evil has crept into the world without any cause. They suppose that Adam's first sin consisted in a mere want of conformity to the law of God, and had no positive cause. They compare all moral evil to cold, which they suppose is owing to the mere want of the warm influence of the sun, and not to any positive cause. But what right they have to suppose that cold is owing to a mere want of heat, more than that heat is owing to a mere want of cold, I know not; and I believe they cannot tell. There is not a truer or plainer proposition in nature, than that every effect must have a cause. Sin is an effect as much as holiness, and must have a cause as much as holiness. And if we look into the Bible, we shall find that the inspired writers as often and as plainly speak of the cause of a bad heart as of a good heart, of a hard heart as of a soft heart, and of sin as of holiness. They represent holiness as consisting in pure, holy, disinterested love; and sin as consisting in interested love, or selfishness. They represent God as producing holiness and producing sin. It is no more possible to conceive that selfishness should get into the world, than that holiness should get into the world, without a divine agency. There is but one true and satisfactory answer to be given to the question which has been agitated for ages, *Whence came evil?* — and that is, *it came from the great First Cause of all things.* This must certainly be true, if sin does not consist in a mere want of conformity to the law of God, but in a free voluntary exercise of that selfishness which is the only possible transgression of it. But we are told that all sins of omission consist in a mere want of conformity to the divine law. Though this appears a little plausible, it is easy to see that there is no weight in it. I know that there are many sins which are called sins of omission, and are always considered as criminal. But let us consider in what their criminality consists. It does not consist in a mere want of thinking, or the mere want of speaking, or in the mere want of acting. Idleness may be said to be a sin of omission. If a man who is able to work, who needs to work, and who ought to work, neglects to work, he is guilty of idleness, which is a sin of omission. But

in what does his sin consist? It consists in his freely, voluntarily refusing to do what he knows he ought to do for his own good and the good of others; and not in having no choice, no design, no intention, about being idle. His refusing to obey the command to labor is as really a positive act of disobedience to and transgression of the law of God, as an act of laboring on the Sabbath. The priest and the Levite, who passed by the poor man they saw wounded, and neglected to relieve him, were evidently guilty of a sin of omission. But did their sin consist in a mere want of conformity to, or in an actual transgression of, the law of love? They were not destitute of perception, reason, conscience, or volition. They had positive exercises of heart, which were altogether selfish, and directly contrary to that love to man which the divine law required. They had as positive exercises of selfishness as the good Samaritan had positive exercises of benevolence. They as positively disobeyed the divine law, as the Samaritan positively obeyed it. If any one will thoroughly and candidly examine the subject, he will find that all sin consists in a positive transgression of the divine law, and not in a mere want of conformity to it. Of course he will see that sin must have as positive a cause as holiness. The opinion that all moral evil is owing to a mere privative cause, and primarily consists in a mere want of conformity to the divine law, is not only very erroneous, but leads to many other great and dangerous errors.

2. If the divine law requires pure, disinterested love, and forbids selfishness, then every free, voluntary exercise of the heart is either an act of obedience or disobedience of the law of God. There are no free, voluntary exercises of a moral agent who is under law to God, that are indifferent—neither good nor evil; or that are almost good and not quite, or almost evil and not quite. The divine law is the infallible standard of moral good and evil, and condemns all free, voluntary exercises which it does not require. Many imagine that there are a great many desires, designs, dispositions, inclinations, intentions, resolutions and wishes, which are almost good, but not quite; and a great many that are almost sinful, but not quite. And upon this ground they suppose that there a great many persons that are almost sinners, but not quite; or almost christians, but not quite. And they have the same opinion of themselves. They imagine that they sometimes almost obey the law, but not quite; and sometimes almost disobey the law, but not quite. But there is no such thing as almost obeying, or almost disobeying, the divine law. A sinner never approaches any nearer obeying the law at one time than at another; but always breaks it, by every imagination of the thought of his heart. And a christian

always obeys or disobeys the divine law. There are no *venial* sins, as papists imagine. They suppose mankind do a great many things which are not wholly right nor wholly wrong, and do not amount to real obedience or disobedience to the divine law. These they call venial sins, or sins that are small and may be winked at, or allowed. But the divine law knows no such things. It condemns whatever it does not require. Every free, voluntary exercise of the mind is either holy and benevolent, or sinful and selfish. Hence says our Saviour, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." Every benevolent exercise is obedience to the law, and every selfish affection is a transgression of the law. No voluntary exercise is partly benevolent and partly selfish. Nor is there the least resemblance between a benevolent and a selfish affection. There is therefore no possibility of partly obeying and partly disobeying the divine law, by any free, voluntary exercises. The divine law is exceeding broad, and reaches to all the exercises of the heart, and either requires or forbids every exercise. As every sin is a transgression of the law, so the least sin is exceeding sinful. It is disobedience to the supreme authority of the supreme Being. And whoever realizes this, cannot think light of any sin, or make a mock at sin.

3. If every selfish exercise be a transgression of the law, then those are under a deep deception who imagine that they have no sin. There are some at this day, who maintain the sinless perfection of saints in this life. Some publicly profess to believe that they have actually attained to a state of perfect freedom from sin, and have become perfectly sanctified. They not only believe, but teach this doctrine, by which they not only deceive themselves but others. For if they would only view themselves in the glass of the divine law, they would soon be convinced that they fall far below that standard of perfection. If they would only consider that every selfish affection is a transgression of the law, they would be far from thinking that they have no sin, and are more holy than the most holy men whose characters are drawn by the infallible pen of divine inspiration. Solomon says that "there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not." Job says, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." Paul says, "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me:" and he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" After this, he expressly declares that he fell far short of sinless perfection. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but

I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is contrary to the whole current of scripture to suppose that any mere man since the fall, ever did, or ever will attain to sinless perfection in this life; but yet a large denomination of christians publicly profess and maintain this unscriptural doctrine. Though all the Methodists do not pretend to have actually reached sinless perfection, yet they generally profess to believe and zealously inculcate this doctrine. But their opinion has no foundation in reason, observation or scripture; and originates in nothing but spiritual ignorance and self-deception. This Christ's most beloved disciple has told us. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us." The same denomination of christians maintain that the best of christians, even those who have, as they supposed, attained to sinless perfection, may nevertheless finally fall away and eternally perish. This great error arises from a still greater and absolutely fundamental error which they hold and strenuously propagate; that is, the denial of the doctrine of personal election to eternal life. They speak of the doctrine of election and reprobation in terms that are not fit to be used on any subject. But some may ask, why do you mention these errors? I answer, because the evidence of their falsehood and dangerous tendency clearly appears from the subject I am considering; and because these errors are zealously propagated near us and all around us, and thousands and thousands in New England and in the United States, are imbibing them with great avidity, at the risk of their eternal interests. It becomes every minister and every church, to contend earnestly for great and essential truths, and to guard themselves and to guard others against all false and dangerous errors in religion.

4. If every selfish exercise is a transgression of the law, and every transgression of the law is sin, then every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. The least sin is an act of rebellion against God, the supreme Sovereign and Lawgiver of the universe. Though some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others, yet every sin is real rebellion against him, and deserves the weight of his eternal wrath. One sin is as real a transgression of the law as another, and as justly deserves the divine displeasure. Accordingly we find that God has threatened in his law, to inflict everlasting punishment for every transgression,

and consequently for the least transgression. For it is written, "The wages of sin is death;" and "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If what the law requires be right, then what it threatens is just. One reason why so many are apt to think the penalty of the law unjust is, because they do not think that every selfish affection and action is a real sin, or transgression of the law; for it is essential to every law, human or divine, to threaten punishment to every transgressor of it. The law of God threatens death, eternal death, to every transgressor, because every transgression of the divine law renders every transgressor deserving to be punished for ever. For his guilt will for ever remain; and as long as his guilt remains he continues to deserve to be punished. The divine law is the infallible measure of duty, of guilt and of punishment. The moral Governor of moral agents is absolutely bound to treat them according to the holy and righteous law he has given them. And we know that the law which God has given to men is holy, just and good in its precept and penalty. It is, therefore, as certain that every transgressor of his law deserves eternal death, as that he has actually threatened to inflict that punishment for the least transgression.

5. If the law of God forbids all selfish and sinful affections upon pain of eternal death, then mankind are all naturally in a very guilty and wretched condition. If their character and condition are to be measured by the divine law, then they are by nature in a state of perfect guilt and complete condemnation. They do nothing but what is a transgression of the divine law, which condemns them to eternal death for every transgression. They have done nothing but sin every day since they were born, and consequently have been continually treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath; and nothing prevents God from executing the penalty of his holy law upon them but his mere sovereign, unpromised mercy. Their feet stand on slippery places, and may slide at any moment that God sees fit to determine. This is the plain, simple truth with respect to every sinner. And this plain, simple truth is more alarming and tremendous to an awakened sinner than all the thunderings and lightnings which attended the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. Those displays of the divine displeasure were transitory and momentary; but the sentence which the law passes upon every transgressor is a sentence of eternal death. But why do you attempt to alarm our fears by representing sin as a transgression of the law, and the law as threatening death for every transgression? We have often heard all this before, and are prepared to hear it again,

without any painful fears and apprehensions. But perhaps you are mistaken, as thousands of others have been who were as stout hearted as you are now. I will mention one instance. It is that of Paul. He was a man of as much knowledge, and as much courage and fortitude, as you are. But he tells us that he could not stand before the requirements and threatenings of the divine law. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." I think I see what you have often seen, poor guilty sinners bowed down, hopeless and helpless, in the utmost anguish and distress, crying, What must we do to be saved? And I think I see one and another of you, who are most stout hearted, sinking down in dismay and despair. I ask you what is the matter? You exclaim, We have sinned against God; we have transgressed his law; we deserve his curse; his dreadful wrath abides upon us; we cannot stand before him; we fall by our own sin and guilt into the endless torments of hell.

SERMON XXXIX.

SELFISHNESS THE ESSENCE OF MORAL DEPRAVITY.

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. — Luke, vi. 32.

When Christ first appeared in his public character, he displayed so much kindness, compassion and benevolence, in healing the sick, relieving the distressed, and preaching the gospel to the poor, that he was almost universally beloved as well as admired. The high and low, the learned and unlearned, the teachers and those that were taught, flocked after him to hear his doctrines and to see and experience his miracles. He appeared to be what it was foretold that he should be, "the desire of all nations." At least, the Scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, though disunited among themselves, agreed to admire and to follow the long expected Messiah. And to any one less acquainted with the human heart than Christ was, they would have appeared to be his real friends. But he knew what was in man, and was never deceived by any false appearances of love and esteem. As he perfectly knew the characters of all who followed him, so in his addresses to the mixed multitudes, he directed his discourses to the hearts and consciences of both the sincere and insincere. And as he had occasion while his real enemies wore the mask of love, to point out the distinction between true love and false, so he dwelt much upon this subject in both his public and private discourses. An instance of this we have in the context, where we find a description of his followers, and a summary of his discourse which he delivered to them. "He came down with them and stood in the plain; and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people

out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold your reward is great in heaven." He now turns from his disciples to the multitude, and says, "But wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.*" What could have been more pertinent than this discourse to the multitudes, who united with his disciples in following him, and who practically expressed so much regard for him? It was suited to make them all see and feel that essential distinction which there is between true love and false, and between saints and sinners. He first describes that pure, disinterested love which forms the character of saints, and then contrasts it with that selfishness which forms the character of sinners; and finally appeals to sinners themselves, whether they deserve the character of saints while they love only those that love them. There is now, perhaps, as much need as there ever was, to set this subject in a just and intelligible light. And in order to this, it is proposed to consider why sinners love themselves; why they love others; and why there is no moral goodness in their loving themselves and others.

I. Let us consider why sinners love themselves. It is plainly supposed in the text that sinners love themselves; for they are said to love those that love them, which could not be

accounted for if they were wholly destitute of love to themselves. In other passages of scripture, they are said to be lovers of their ownselves, and to seek their own things and not the things of others. But this is too evident from experience and observation to need any proof. Sinners certainly love themselves. But why? Not for the same reason that saints love themselves; if they did, they would be saints. Nor do they love themselves from mere instinct, as the lower species of animals do. But they love themselves because they are themselves, which is neither a true love nor a mere animal affection, but proper selfishness. Pleasant and painful sensations are common to saints and sinners, and to all sensitive natures, and have no moral quality belonging to them. Every creature, perhaps, whether rational or irrational, takes pleasure in receiving its proper food; but this love to its food is not love to itself, or selfishness. The saint and the sinner may equally love honey, because it is agreeable to the taste; but this love to honey is neither interested nor disinterested love, and of course is neither virtuous nor vicious. Men never love any particular food from a moral motive, but from the constitution of their nature, in which they are passive, and have no active concern. The case is different in loving themselves. In this they properly act, and act from a moral motive. Sinners love themselves not because they are a part of the intellectual system, nor because the general good requires them to regard their personal happiness, but because they are themselves. They love their own interest because it is their own, in distinction from the interest of all other created or uncreated beings. This is a free, voluntary exercise, which is contrary to their reason and conscience, and which they know to be in its own nature wrong. Their interest is really no more valuable for being theirs, than if it belonged to others; and they themselves are no more valuable than other creatures of the same character and capacity. To love themselves, therefore, because they are themselves, is to love themselves from a motive peculiar to selfish creatures.

II. We are to consider why sinners love others. Our Saviour said to his disciples, that if they were of the world, the world would love them. And he said in the text that sinners love those that love them. Though the love of sinners always centres in themselves, yet it may extend to others, and take in a large circle of mankind, and even God himself. Sinners loved Christ, and cried "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The whole people of Israel loved the God of Moses when he carried them through the Red Sea, delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, and gave them manna from heaven. But the question before us is, Why do

such selfish creatures love others? The answer is easy. It is because they have received, or expect to receive, benefit from them. This is the reason our Lord assigns. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." For the same reason that sinners love themselves, they naturally love those that love them and are disposed to do them good. As they love their own interest because it is their own, so they love every person or object which serves to increase or preserve their own interest. They do not value and love others because they are valuable and worthy to be loved, but merely because they view them as means or instruments of securing or advancing their own personal happiness. They value their fellow men for the same reason that they value their own houses and lands, flocks and herds. They love these, not on their own account, but because they serve their selfish purposes. So they love their fellow men, not on their own account, but because they deem them in some way or other subservient to their private, separate interest.

III. It remains to inquire, why there is no moral goodness in the love which sinners exercise towards themselves and others. Christ supposes that they all know the nature of their love, and that there is nothing virtuous or praise worthy in it. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? If ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive as much again, what thank have ye?" Is there any thing truly virtuous and amiable in men's loving themselves, or in loving others from mere selfish, mercenary motives? All men in the world know that there is no moral goodness in such selfish affections, and they are always unwilling to acknowledge that they are actuated by mercenary motives. Who is willing to allow that he loves himself merely because he is himself? or that he loves others merely because they love him? or that he never does good to others only when he thinks it will be for his private advantage? Who in public life is willing to avow that he is not seeking the public good, but only his own private interest? Who is willing to own that he has ever given or taken a bribe? Who is willing to be seen in doing any act of selfishness? Who ever thanked another for doing him a benefit only for the sake of gaining a much greater benefit? We never thank men for loving themselves, nor for loving us merely for their own sake. It is the unanimous sentiment of mankind that there is no

virtue in that love which flows entirely from mercenary motives. But why? This is the point now to be illustrated. Here then I would observe,

1. That there is no moral goodness in the love which sinners feel and express, because it is not a conformity to that love which God feels and expresses. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He seeks not only his own glory, but the real good of others. Christ, therefore, presents him as the standard of perfection, and commands them to conform to him who loves those that hate him, and does good to his most inveterate enemies. "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." There is no conformity in the love of sinners to the love of God. His love is virtuous and excellent, because it terminates upon all proper objects; but there is no moral beauty or excellence in their love, because it wholly terminates upon an improper object; that is, their own selfish interest. God does not love them exclusively, and merely because they are themselves, but because he regards the good of every creature according to its worth. This is a holy and disinterested love; but when sinners love themselves because they are themselves, and love others because they are beneficial to them, there is no moral virtue or excellence in it. It bears no conformity to the love of God, which is the standard of all moral perfection.

2. The selfish love of sinners has no moral goodness in it, because it is no obedience to the divine law. This law requires them to love God with all the heart, and to love their fellow men as themselves. But when they love themselves because they are themselves, and love others only because they have received or expect to receive benefit from them, do they obey the divine law? Do they feel towards God as they would that he should feel towards them? Or do they feel towards others as they would that others should feel towards them? Does their selfish affection in the least degree answer the demands of that law which requires pure, disinterested love? It is morally impossible for sinners to love God supremely, and their fellow men impartially, from a selfish heart. Let their love to God or man rise ever so high, it can have no moral goodness in it, because it is not obedience to the divine law, which requires nothing but pure, holy, disinterested love.

3. There is no moral goodness in the selfishness of sinners, because it is the very essence of all moral evil. All the wickedness of Satan consists in his selfishness. He loves himself

because he is himself, and loves only those who love him, because their love serves to promote what he considers as his cause and interest. He desires to bring God and all his intelligent creatures into subjection to himself, and of course hates, and opposes, and endeavors to destroy, all who stand in his way, and obstruct his malignant designs. He knows by his own feelings, that selfishness will hate God and oppose all good. Accordingly, when he accused Job of selfishness, he said that he would rise in enmity against God, and blaspheme his name, if God should only touch his selfish interest. "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Had Job been totally selfish, Satan's prediction would have been fulfilled, and he would have hated, and if he dared would have blasphemed, God, when he stripped him of all that he had given him. Our Saviour represented selfishness in the same light. He told such as followed him from mercenary motives, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." And he told certain persons who had professed to love him and believe in him, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And the apostle Paul in his epistle to Timothy represents selfishness in the most odious light. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their ownselves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." There is no evil affection, and no evil conduct, but what selfishness will, under certain circumstances, produce. It is the directly opposite affection to true benevolence, and therefore the root of all moral evil. It is the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It seeks a personal interest, which is diametrically opposite to the glory of God and the general interest of his kingdom. It opposes the good of sinners themselves, and makes them, as the apostle says, "hateful, and hating one another." It tends to spread misery and destruction through the universe. It makes creatures as bad as they can be, and would destroy them all, were it not for the power and wisdom and goodness of God, which are employed in restraining, directing, and overruling its pernicious influence. Though sinners may love those which love them, and do good

to those that do good to them, yet the nature of their feelings and conduct is still the same. Their apparent goodness is the essence of moral evil. Their partial love is general malevolence, and their best deeds are an abomination to the Lord. All their affections and exertions terminate in themselves. They value and regard themselves more than all other beings put together, and whose interest they would sacrifice to promote their own. And can there be any thing virtuous, or amiable, or praise worthy, in such a totally selfish love, which is disconformity to God, disobedience to his law, and in its nature and tendency destructive of all the good of his holy kingdom?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners may love themselves and others from mere selfish motives, then it is easy to account for all their kind and friendly conduct towards their fellow creatures, consistently with their total depravity. Their selfishness naturally prompts them to do any thing which they think will turn to their own personal advantage. To gain friends, they will show themselves friendly. To gain the love, esteem, and confidence of others, they will do acts of kindness, compassion, and even liberality. And the most depraved and selfish creature in the universe would do the same things, to obtain the same selfish ends. Satan always acts from this motive, when he transforms himself into an angel of light, and appears to seek the good of others. When he tempted our first parents, he professed to be more concerned to promote their knowledge and happiness, than even their Creator. When he tempted Christ to turn stones into bread, and commit himself to the divine care and protection, he appeared like a kind and friendly angel. And we have reason to believe that he loves his infernal subjects who love him, and are heartily engaged to promote his cause and interest in this world; otherwise, as our Saviour says, his kingdom could not stand. But such things are no evidence against his total depravity, and therefore they are no evidence against the total depravity of sinners. Indeed, there is nothing that can be said against their total depravity, but what may be said with equal plausibility against his total depravity. If it be said that they love themselves, so does he. If it be said that they love those that love them, so does he. If it be said that they are kind and friendly to those that promote their interest, so is he. If it be said that they do, in their conscience, approve of what is holy, just and good in others, so does he. He approved of the holiness of Christ, when he called him "the Holy One of God." If it be said that they do, in their conscience, disap-

prove of what is selfish and sinful in others, so does he. He represented Job as selfish, and condemned him as wicked. If Satan were placed in the same situation in which sinners are now placed, he would appear as good as they. Or if they were placed in the same situation in which he is now placed, they would appear as bad as he. There is no more difficulty, therefore, in accounting for the conduct of sinners, consistently with their total depravity, than in accounting for the conduct of the devil, consistently with his total depravity. Total selfishness in Satan and in sinners will satisfactorily account for the good as well as bad appearances in both.

2. If the moral depravity of sinners consists in selfishness, then the moral depravity of Adam consisted in selfishness, and not in the mere want of holiness. Supposing he had lost his holiness at the moment he was tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit, yet his loss of holiness could not have rendered him morally depraved. All his natural powers, instincts, and appetites must have remained as innocent, *after* he lost his holiness, as *before* he lost it. There was no possibility of his becoming morally depraved, without a free, voluntary exercise of selfishness. And it appears from the account given of his first offence, that it essentially consisted in loving himself supremely. He voluntarily partook of the forbidden fruit, from the motive of increasing his own knowledge and happiness, in opposition to the glory of God and the good of all his posterity. This was freely and voluntarily turning from benevolence to selfishness, which is the essence of moral depravity. He became morally depraved in the same manner that Satan, the first sinner in the universe, became depraved. Satan had no corporeal instincts or appetites to tempt him to rebel against his Maker. He loved his own glory more than the glory of God, and aspired to become independent and supreme, which was the essence of selfishness, or moral depravity. The prevailing notion that Adam became morally depraved by the mere want of holiness, is repugnant to the very nature of moral depravity, and to every dictate of reason and scripture.

3. If sinners love themselves because they are themselves, and love others only because they suppose them to be subservient to their interest, then their affections are always selfish and sinful, let them rise ever so high, or extend ever so far. They often do love those who love them, very ardently. But they never love such persons so ardently as they love themselves. For all their love to others flows from love to themselves, and the streams cannot rise so high as the fountain. Hence their most ardent and raised affections to others are as really selfish and sinful, as if they were ever so low and languid. Their

nature is precisely the same, whether they are stronger or weaker. It is morally impossible that their love to their friends or to their Creator should rise so high as to become disinterested or virtuous love. And as their affections do not become any better by rising ever so high, so they do not become any better by extending ever so far. The same mercenary motives which induce them to love their intimate friends, may induce them to extend their regards to their country and to their Saviour. Many sinners undoubtedly love their country, because the prosperity of their country tends to promote their prosperity; and some sinners love their Redeemer, because they think he loves them. Multitudes followed Christ for the sake of the loaves and the fishes, and loved him because they thought he loved them, and would promote both their temporal and eternal good. But in all these cases, the love of sinners was perfectly selfish and sinful. It is exactly of the same nature as the love of the miser to his money. Could sinners have a clear and extensive view of all created and uncreated objects, and did they love them all for the sake of their own private, personal benefit, their selfish love, instead of becoming any better, would become unspeakably worse. For the guilt of their selfishness would be in exact proportion to the extent of their knowledge. If it be criminal for one person to prefer his interest to a greater interest of another, it must be more criminal to prefer his interest to the greater interest of a nation, and for the same reason, it must be unspeakably more criminal still to prefer his interest to the whole interest of the universe. The consequence irresistibly follows, that the higher the love of sinners rises, and the farther it extends, the more criminal it becomes.

4. If sinners are constantly under the governing influence of selfishness, then they must experience an essential change in their affections, in order to be saved. If they naturally possessed the least degree of disinterested love, or true holiness, there would be no need of a radical and essential change in their moral exercises. They might love God and repent of sin and believe in Christ, without becoming new creatures. Their carnal mind, which is perfect selfishness, cannot be new modified or moulded into benevolence, by any exterior means or motives. Though under some circumstances, they may, without a change of heart, hate the world which they once loved, and love God whom they once hated, yet their love and hatred will arise from the same mercenary motives, which are entirely sinful. Sinners are continually turning their attention and their affections from one object to another; but their love and their hatred continue to be of the same selfish nature. The careless

sinner fixes his whole attention and affection upon the world; but when he is awakened from his stupidity, he turns his whole attention from the world to God, whom he hates for the same reason for which he before loved the world. Whatever sinners love and hate, they love and hate from selfish motives; and consequently no change of objects, motives, or circumstances, has the least tendency to change the nature of their affections. So that nothing short of a divine influence upon their hearts, can turn them from selfishness to benevolence, or from sin to holiness, without which they cannot see the kingdom of God.

5. If sinners love themselves because they are themselves, which is selfish and sinful, then after they experience a saving change from selfishness to benevolence, they love themselves in a manner totally different from what they did before. They love themselves in the same manner that God loves them. He loves them impartially, according to their characters and capacities. And they love themselves impartially, according to their characters and capacities. He values their interest no more nor less than it is worth. And they value their own interest no more nor less than it is worth. Moses valued his interest less than the interest of all the Israelites. Paul valued his salvation less than the salvation of his whole nation. Moses and Paul loved themselves as disinterestedly as they loved their fellow men. Many have imagined that it is impossible for men to love themselves from any other motives than selfish motives, and of consequence, that it is impossible for them to love others better than themselves. But this is a false and dangerous opinion. Just so far as men become holy or benevolent, they cease to love themselves selfishly; and so far as they cease to love themselves selfishly, they love their fellow men impartially; and so far as they love them impartially, they will not fail to love some more, as well as less, than themselves. Good men have no right to be selfish in the least degree; but they have a right to value their own temporal and eternal interest according to its worth, and no more. And their goodness always leads them to form this just opinion, and to exercise this impartial affection, in respect to themselves. It is true, indeed, that when sinners become saints, they do not become perfectly holy and free from selfishness; but as soon as they shall arrive at the state of moral perfection, there will not remain the least tincture of selfishness in their hearts.

Finally, it appears from this discourse that it is highly necessary to explain and inculcate the total selfishness of sinners. They never will believe that they are totally depraved, until they see wherein total depravity consists. They are very apt to think that their intellectual powers are as good as those of other

men, and that they sometimes, at least, employ them in as amiable and virtuous a manner. This leads them to disbelieve and deny the doctrine of total depravity. But let them be taught that total depravity consists in total selfishness, which is a free and voluntary exercise that belongs to the heart and not to the understanding, and they can no longer disbelieve or deny that they are totally depraved. For they must know from their own experience, that selfishness has reigned in their hearts, and constantly led them to regard their own good more than the good of others, or the glory of God. And so soon as they are convinced of the total selfishness of their hearts, they will be equally convinced of their total depravity. This shows the importance of explaining and inculcating the entire selfishness of sinners. There is no other truth so directly calculated to fasten conviction on their conscience, and to throw them into the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. As soon as they come to realize that they have always acted from mean, mercenary motives, in all they have done for God, for themselves, and for others, their former goodness, and their former hopes built upon it, entirely vanish, and they see no ground of dependence, but only the undeserved and unpromised mercy of God. This was the case of Paul under a realizing sense of his total selfishness. When the divine law was brought home to his conscience, his sins revived, and the ground of his hope gave way. For he realized that he had always been governed by mere selfish motives in all his conduct, which was expressly forbidden by the precept, "Thou shalt not covet;" that is, thou shalt not feel nor express the least degree of selfishness. It is in vain to preach about total depravity without explaining it; for nothing will convince sinners that they are totally depraved, until they are made to see and feel the total selfishness of their hearts. This Christ knew, and therefore not only taught total depravity, but made it appear to be total selfishness. It is not the name, but the thing signified by total depravity, that will carry conviction to stupid, self righteous and self deceived sinners. Upon this subject it is impossible to be too plain and explicit. It is necessary to teach sinners the nature and criminality of selfishness, not only to convince them of their guilt and danger, but also to convince them of their immediate and indispensable obligation to perform every duty which God has required them to perform. As soon as they see and feel that they are totally selfish, they cannot help seeing and feeling that they have no excuse for the neglect of duty, but are under immediate and indispensable obligations to turn from all their transgressions, to make them a new heart and a new spirit, to repent and believe the gospel, and to walk in newness of life. When they

clearly see, and sensibly feel, that all their depravity and criminality consists in their free and voluntary exercises of selfishness, they can no longer plead it as an excuse for impenitence and unbelief, because they know that it depends upon their own choice, whether they shall love or hate God, whether they shall continue in, or cease from sin, whether they shall accept or reject the offers of mercy, and whether they shall be saved or lost. They feel the whole authority of the law and of the gospel binding them to turn and live, while they realize that their depravity is not their calamity, but their guilt. And when the preachers of the gospel have thus shown sinners the plague of their own hearts, they may with propriety and force address them in the language of the apostle: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."

SERMON XL.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

THE heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? JEREMIAH, xvii. 9.

THIS passage of scripture is very often quoted, and almost as often misunderstood and misapplied. All self deceivers are fond of believing that the heart is so wicked and so deceitful, that it is impossible for any to know whether they are in the state of nature, or of grace. They frequently say they sincerely desire to know their hearts, yet they are so extremely deceitful that it is utterly out of their power. It is, therefore, of great practical importance to exhibit the spirit of this text, and unfold its true meaning. It is evident that God is here addressing sinners, whose hearts alone are desperately wicked. And this being true, it naturally follows that they are the persons who find it so extremely difficult to know their own hearts. The prophet plainly supposes that the wickedness of their hearts is the ground of their deceitfulness; and their deceitfulness is the ground of the difficulty in knowing them. So that the question in the text is, who among sinners can know the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their own hearts? And this question leads us to conclude,

That it is extremely difficult for sinners to know their own hearts.

The truth of this proposition none will be disposed to dispute; for saints know it to be true by their own experience, and sinners in general are fond of believing it to be true. I shall therefore only attempt to show,

I. What is implied in their knowing their own hearts; and,

II. Why this is so extremely difficult for them to know.

I. We are to consider what is implied in their knowing their own hearts.

They are as conscious of their own hearts as saints are of theirs. They know that they have hearts, which are distinct from perception, reason, conscience, and all their intellectual powers and faculties. But this knowledge of their hearts is not that which is intended in the text. For in this sense they may perfectly know their own hearts, while they remain entirely ignorant of them in other important respects. This leads me to observe,

1. That their knowing their hearts in the sense of the text, implies the knowledge of their selfishness. It is this alone that distinguishes their hearts from the hearts of saints. Those who bear the moral image of God, have hearts of universal and disinterested benevolence. But the hearts of sinners are wholly selfish. Saints love those who do not love them; but sinners love those only who do love them; and all the criminality of their hearts consists in their partial, interested affections. They may love all the objects that saints love, and hate all the objects that saints hate; and yet all their affections be different, in their nature, from the affections of saints. Whether they love or hate good or bad objects, still their love and hatred are entirely sinful, because they are altogether selfish. This they are not apt to know, nor believe. They often think that however different they may be in other respects from saints, yet they do not differ from them in point of selfishness. They imagine they have both love to God and man, which does not arise from mercenary motives. But they cannot be said to know their own hearts, until they know that all their desires and affections are of a selfish nature, and actually flow from love to themselves.

2. The knowledge of their hearts implies the knowledge of their desperate, incurable wickedness. Their hearts are selfish, and so selfish, that no means or mere secondary causes can cure them. For their selfishness does not arise from ignorance of themselves and of other beings and objects, but from their placing their supreme love wholly on themselves. No intellectual light or moral motives which can be exhibited before them, will have the least tendency to alter or meliorate their hearts. Were it possible for them to have a clear, just and comprehensive view of themselves, of God, of Christ, of all the truths in the Bible, and of all things in this and in every other world, it would only serve to excite love to themselves, and make them sensible that they valued their own interest and happiness more than the interests and happiness of the universe. And though they should feel the impropriety and criminality of such selfish

affections, yet this would have no tendency to destroy their feelings, or to make them truly benevolent. Hence their hearts are desperately wicked. There is no hope of their ever becoming better from any motives that can be set before them, or from any means which can be used with them. And until sinners see their hearts in this light, they are unacquainted with them, and know not the nature and depth of their own depravity. Besides,

3. Their knowing their own hearts implies their knowing their extreme deceitfulness. They are deceitful above all things. There is nothing so apt to deceive. They will deceive not only once or twice, but a thousand times. They will deceive every day, every hour, and almost every moment. They are perpetually changing, and putting on new and different appearances. They change as often as the objects upon which they are placed change. They will love one object this moment, and quite a different one the next. The object which they hated yesterday, they will love to-day; and the object they love to-day, they will hate to-morrow. They are as unstable as water, and as changeable as the wind. And it is this mutability, which makes them so deceitful. Sinners have no ground to place the least dependence on their hearts. And they cannot be said to know them, until they become thoroughly acquainted with their extreme deceitfulness. Having considered what is implied in their knowing their own hearts, I proceed to show,

II. Why it is so extremely difficult for them to gain this knowledge.

"The heart is deceitful above all things—who can know it?" According to this representation, there must be some great difficulty of some kind or other, in the way of sinners' knowing their own hearts. But from what does this difficulty principally arise? Certainly it cannot arise from their being incapable of knowing what passes in their own minds. They have as quick a sense of feeling as saints have, and are as conscious of the operations of their own hearts. When they love or hate, choose or refuse, they are conscious of having these exercises, and of perceiving the objects of their love and hatred, or of their choice and rejection. So that the difficulty of knowing their own hearts cannot arise from this quarter. Nor can it arise from their being incapable of discerning the moral nature of their voluntary exercises. Their consciences are as good as the consciences of saints, and they are as capable of knowing the criminality of all their selfish affections. This is evident from the experience of sinners. Sometimes they are conscious of the criminality of all their desires and hopes and fears, and feel self condemned for being entirely destitute of true love to God

and man, and being entirely absorbed in love to their own present and future happiness. They know that they have such feelings; and they know that such feelings are altogether criminal. And this, which some sinners know, all might know; for all have the same capacity and means of knowing. So that they are under no natural inability of knowing their own hearts as fully as saints know theirs. But yet there is a great difficulty in knowing their own hearts.

1. They are unwilling to know their own hearts. This is true of all sinners. Accordingly Christ says, "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." It always gives pain to sinners to know their own hearts, because it always brings guilt and danger into view. There is no knowledge so disagreeable to them, as the knowledge of their hearts. Yea, no knowledge would be disagreeable to them, if they were only willing to know themselves. But this unwillingness to become acquainted with their hearts is extremely great, and renders it next to impossible to give them this important and necessary knowledge. It has obstructed the instructions of the prophets, of Christ, of the apostles, and of thousands of Christ's ambassadors since his day. Sinners will shut their eyes and stop their ears against the truth, and, if possible, remain ignorant of their own hearts. They cannot bear to see the total and incurable sinfulness and malignity of their hearts, and the dreadful evils which appear to be connected with such odious and destructive affections. To think of being holden by the cords of their iniquities, and bound over by them to endless destruction, makes them shrink back from the knowledge of themselves, and in a manner, compels them to prefer darkness to light. They had rather rest in ignorance and ease, than search into the corruptions of their hearts, and discover such a source of guilt and wretchedness as they carry about with them. This is one great difficulty in the way of their knowing themselves.

2. There is another thing which renders it still more difficult for them to know their own hearts. It is what the scripture calls the deceitfulness of sin. All sin is selfishness, and all selfishness is deceitful. For selfishness will put on ten thousand different appearances. It will always change, as the circumstances of sinners change, and dispose them to feel differently in every different situation. The desperate wickedness or selfishness of the natural heart is represented in the text as the cause of its extreme deceitfulness: and its extreme deceitfulness is represented as the cause of the extreme difficulty in the way of sinners, knowing their own hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" What

sinner can know his own heart, which is totally corrupt, perfectly selfish, and extremely deceitful? How can he become acquainted with all its turnings and windings under all the situations and various circumstances in which he is placed, and amidst all the variety of objects with which he is surrounded? His heart will vary just as his outward circumstances and inward views vary. He will perpetually feel towards every being, every creature and every object, just as it tends to promote or obstruct his own happiness. This is true of all sinners. They love or hate all objects, just as they view them as having a favorable or unfavorable aspect, in respect to themselves. In particular,

1. They love or hate God, just as he appears friendly or unfriendly to them. While he smiles upon them in his providence, and grants them the desires of their hearts, they are well pleased with him. They rejoice that God is, that he governs the world, and that he fills the earth with his goodness. They have no consciousness of the least enmity against him, but are disposed to speak well of him, and give thanks at the remembrance of his mercies. This was the disposition of the Israelites at the side of the Red Sea. They could joyfully join in celebrating the praises of God, for their great and signal deliverance. They sang his praise with gladness of heart. And all other sinners would have done the same under the same circumstances. Their selfish hearts are always pleased with the favors God bestows upon them, and they love him so long as they think he loves them. And they are no less pleased with spiritual, than temporal favors. When they imagine God is disposed to forgive their sins and admit them to heaven, they will sensibly rejoice in the hope of eternal life. In a word, they will always love God while they believe he loves them, and intends to do them good. But on the other hand, whenever he appears opposed to them, their hearts are opposed to him. Their selfish hearts dispose them to hate God himself, when he appears to stand in the way of their happiness. This was exemplified in the Israelites, who sang his praises but soon forgot his works. As soon as they perceived that he was a holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, disposed to destroy them for their unholy, selfish affections, they turned against him, murmured, complained, and expressed their bitter opposition to him, by saying, he has brought us into the wilderness to destroy us. The selfish hearts of sinners always will dispose them to love or hate God, just as they view him friendly or unfriendly to them.

2. The hearts of sinners love or hate Christ, accordingly as he appears to be their friend or their enemy. This was verified

through the whole course of his public ministry. While they viewed him as their friend and temporal deliverer, they flocked around him in multitudes wherever he went, and rent the air with their hosannas. But when he let them know his true character, his ultimate design, and his real feelings, their selfish hearts immediately changed, their love turned to enmity, and they zealously cried, "Crucify, crucify him." He knew what was in their hearts before they expressed it in word and deed, and therefore refused to commit himself to those who professed to believe in him, and to love and follow him. Though many followed him, by land and by water, and manifested peculiar love and attachment to him, yet they deserted him as soon as he exposed and condemned their selfish motives. This he did most plainly. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." And "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him."

3. The hearts of sinners love or hate good men, just as they appear for them or against them. Job was the delight and admiration of sinners, while his heart and hand were opened in distributing numerous favors to them, which their needy circumstances required. But when he was no longer able to continue his favors to them, their love turned into neglect, contempt and reproach. Moses, at one time, was the object of universal love and veneration, but at another, the object of general disapprobation and complaint, among the selfish Israelites. At one time, sinners were ready to pluck out their eyes for Paul; and at another, they hated him most heartily, because he told them the truth. When sinners are in distress of mind, they will fly to saints for instruction; but when they become careless and secure, they will shun and avoid them. When they are in prosperity, they despise the prayers of saints; but when they are sick, or in trouble and affliction, they will desire and value them. Indeed, whenever they view good men as their friends and benefactors, they love them; but when they view them as opposed to their evil hearts and conduct, they hate them. This Christ told his disciples to expect from the world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And Solomon says, "An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way, is abomination to the wicked."

4. Sinners love and hate one another, just as they appear to promote or obstruct their interest. Herod and Pontius Pilate were entirely opposed to each other, as long as their interests

interfered, but became friends as soon as their interests and designs coincided. Nations who have been the most hostile to each other, will become friendly and enter into the most solemn compacts to continue so; but they will not continue so any longer than they find it for their interest to continue their peace and amity. Careless and stupid sinners will generally unite in the neglect of their spiritual concerns; but when one and another are awakened to flee from the wrath to come and to seek eternal life, their warmest attachments are weakened, if not destroyed; and they view their former friends as enemies to them, as well as to all righteousness, and studiously avoid their company and corrupting influence. For no persons appear more odious and dangerous than those who would prevent their entering into the kingdom of God.

5. The hearts of sinners lead them to love or hate the world in which they live, accordingly as it smiles or frowns upon them. While the seasons roll round favorably, and produce plenty, peace, health and prosperity, they love the world and the things of the world; but when they are in trouble, sickness and distress, the world loses all its charms, and they hate and renounce the objects which they once loved and pursued, as destructive to their present and future peace. Their love and hatred of the world are always correspondent to their hopes or fears from it. If it smiles upon them while they are stupid, they love it; but if it frowns upon them while they are awakened, they hate it. If it smiles upon them while they are young, they are charmed with it; but if it frowns upon them when they are old, they are sick of it, and hate it. Their love or hatred of the world always varies as their inward views and the different stages and circumstances of life vary.

6. They love and hate their own hearts, as they appear to promise good or threaten evil to them. While their hearts afford them pleasure, they are pleased with them. They love their stupidity, impenitence and unbelief. They love their pride, self-sufficiency, independence, and every selfish affection. But when these selfish exercises plunge them into disappointment, trouble and adversity, and threaten them with future and eternal ruin, then they hate their hearts, wish to restrain them, and would give all the world to get rid of them. Their hearts are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Their hearts in which they once trusted as very good, appear to be what God told them they were, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and destructive of all peace and hope.

7. Their hearts lead them to love or hate the means of grace, accordingly as they appear to do them good or hurt. The

Bible, the Sabbath, the preaching of the gospel, are disagreeable to them while they are in pursuit of worldly happiness. They despise, neglect and resist these means of grace in the days of inward peace and outward prosperity; but when they turn their attention to their eternal interests, and soberly seek the salvation of their souls, all the means of grace appear extremely precious. They highly value the Bible, the Sabbath, and the preaching of the gospel. They can find time to read the Bible, they can find ways to get to the house of God, and they can listen to the voice of divine truth; and after they have heard it, they find time to meditate and call upon God for mercy. The same selfish hearts which led them to neglect, will lead them to improve every means and advantage they enjoy, to promote their spiritual and eternal good.

8. They love or hate convictions, accordingly as they appear to have a favorable or unfavorable aspect upon their future happiness. As long as they think they can be happy without them, they hate them, and do all they can to quench the Spirit, and to restrain the painful reflections of their awakened consciences. But when they are persuaded that they are necessary to promote their conversion and salvation, they ardently seek to cherish and increase them. They are afraid of saying, or doing, or neglecting any thing which has a tendency to lessen or destroy their convictions, or drive them back into their former state of stupidity. Though they hate to realize their guilt and danger, yet they had rather suffer these painful feelings, than to be left to pine away in their sins for ever.

9. They love or hate heaven according to the views they have of it. When they view it as a place of perfect and perpetual happiness, they love it, and desire to take up their everlasting residence in it. But when they view it as a place of pure and perfect holiness, they hate it, and prefer to run the risk of everlasting separation from it, rather than to enter into the presence of a holy God, and into the society of perfectly holy beings. And when they view it as the happy residence of those who are elected to eternal life, their hearts rise in sensible enmity to God and to his chosen people.

Thus it appears that the hearts of sinners perpetually change as the circumstances, relations and connections of things change, without any regard to their natures. They love the same beings and the same objects at one time, and hate them at another; and they love the same things in them at one time, and hate them at another. They may one day, or one hour, love what saints love, and the next day, or the next hour, hate what saints continue to love. They never know how they shall feel in respect to any object in any future time. Their

hearts can put on the appearance of all holy affections at one time, and at another time put on the appearance of all unholy and selfish affections. As their hearts appear better at one time than at another, so they are very apt to think that they are better than they are. For though their affections vary so often, yet they never alter their nature; though they are always selfish, yet they often appear disinterested; and though they are always enmity to God, yet they appear very often to be friendly to God, and to all other beings. This mutability of their hearts renders them deceitful above all things. And this deceitfulness of their hearts is that which renders it so extremely difficult for them to know that they are totally and desperately wicked.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, that there is but one way for men to know their own hearts. They cannot know them from the mere consciousness of having free, voluntary exercises. All men, good and bad, are conscious of what passes in their own minds. When they love or hate, choose or refuse, they are conscious of having these exercises of heart, whether they are or are not conscious of the moral nature of them. Nor can they know whether their moral exercises are right or wrong, good or evil, merely from knowing that they have all the various species of affections which are common to mankind in general; such as love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, submission, patience and confidence. All men exercise love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, submission, patience and confidence, at certain times and under certain circumstances. This variety of affections forms no essential distinction between saints and sinners, and therefore affords no criterion by which men may determine whether their hearts are good or evil. Nor can they determine this point by merely having the same species of religious affections which are common to good and bad men. Sinners may love God, or love Christ, or love heaven, as well as love any other objects; and they may exercise every species of religious affections that saints exercise. Sinners may counterfeit every religious exercise. How is it possible, then, you will ask, for men to know whether their religious exercises are true or false? There is one way, and but one, to determine this great point; and that is, to inquire why they love or hate, rejoice or mourn, hope or fear, or why they exercise submission, patience and confidence. If you love God, inquire why you love him. If you love Christ, inquire why you love him. If you love heaven, inquire why you love that glorious place. If you ex-

ercise submission, inquire why you exercise it. If you exercise patience, inquire why you exercise it. If you exercise confidence, inquire why you exercise it. If you love God for what he is in himself, or on account of his intrinsic and supreme excellence, you have true love to him, which is essentially different from the love that sinners ever exercise towards God; for they love him only for his love to themselves. If you love Christ for the supreme excellence of his divine nature and holy conduct, you have true love to him, which is essentially different from the mercenary love of sinners. If you love heaven, because it is a holy as well as happy place, your love is holy, and essentially different from the selfish love of sinners in desiring heaven only as a place of happiness. If you exercise submission to God, because you choose that he should dispose of you for his own glory through every period of your existence, you exercise true submission, which is essentially different from the submission of sinners, in case they know or believe that he will certainly save them. If you exercise patience, because you are willing that God should afflict you as long as he sees best to afflict you, you exercise true patience, which is essentially different from the patience which arises from mere necessity, which is all the patience that sinners ever exercise. If you trust in God because you choose to trust in him rather than trust in yourselves, or in any of your fellow creatures, you place a confidence in him which sinners durst not do. Thus all men may know their own hearts, notwithstanding their extreme mutability and deceitfulness. If they love God's true character, they will love him under all circumstances. If they love Christ's true character, they will love him under all circumstances. If they love heaven for its holiness, they will love it under all circumstances. But if they do not love these objects on account of their intrinsic excellence, they will love them in one situation, and hate them in another; which will prove that they have not the love of God in them, and are entirely destitute of any holy affections.

2. We learn from what has been said, that saints may more easily ascertain their true character, than sinners can theirs. Though both have the same rule, by which to try their own hearts, and both are able to apply it, yet sinners are unwilling to apply it; and it is their unwillingness to apply it, that renders it so very difficult for them to know the truth respecting their hearts. But this difficulty is in a degree removed from saints. They sincerely desire to know their own hearts; and they are willing to take the only proper way to discover their true character. They pray God to search and try them; and they are, in some measure, willing to search and try themselves, by impartially inquiring why they think they love God and cordially em-

brace the gospel. And as they are conscious of both right and wrong affections, they are much more capable of discerning the difference between holy and unholy, or between selfish and disinterested exercises of heart. They know what it is to love God for what he is in himself, and what it is to love him merely for his favors. Of course they are able to compare their right with their wrong affections, and to discover the essential difference between them. Abraham knew the difference between loving God for what he is in himself, and loving him merely for his favors. Moses knew the difference between loving God for what he is in himself, and loving him merely for his favors. And Job knew the difference between loving God for what he is in himself, and loving him merely for his favors. Accordingly, these good men stood the test of a change of circumstances. They loved God as really when he frowned, as when he smiled; when he removed, as when he bestowed favors. They knew why they loved God, and why God loved them. But sinners have only selfish affections, and know not by experience the difference between selfish and disinterested affections. And when their selfish affections put on the appearance of disinterested affections, they are deceived through the deceitfulness of sin. But they are under no natural necessity of being deceived. They know enough in speculation, to distinguish selfishness from benevolence. If they are deceived, they are deceived through their own fault, and because they choose to deceive themselves. It is a deceived heart which has turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

3. It appears from what has been said, that all the changes that mankind meet with in the course of life, are trials of the heart. Their circumstances are continually changing from evil to good, from adversity to prosperity, and from prosperity to adversity. And every change they experience is a trial of the heart. All will allow that a change from prosperity to adversity is a trial; and a change from great prosperity to great adversity is a great trial. But a change from adversity to prosperity is as real a trial, as a change from prosperity to adversity; and a change from great adversity to great prosperity is a great trial. The reason why such changes are trials is, because they have a natural tendency to draw forth the affections of the heart, whether they are holy or unholy, friendly or unfriendly to God, who is concerned in every change that takes place. Prosperity is as great a trial of the heart as adversity. Mankind are as naturally disposed to abuse the smiles, as the frowns of divine providence. They much oftener overlook and disregard the hand of God in his favors, than in his frowns.

God means to try men's hearts by all the changes which he causes them to experience. God meant to try Pharaoh's heart, by inflicting and removing judgments; and it is worthy of remark that the respite he gave him between removing and inflicting judgments, had the greatest tendency to harden his heart. God meant to try Abraham, by threatening to take away his beloved son Isaac. God meant to try Job, both by changing his circumstances from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity to prosperity again. These changes in respect to these men, produced the effects designed. The changes which Pharaoh experienced, tried his heart, and proved it to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, because it changed with every change of circumstances. The changes which Abraham and Job experienced, tried their hearts, and proved them to be right with God, because they remained the same under entirely different circumstances. All changes try men's hearts, because they prove whether they love God because he is good, or only because he is good to them; and whether they love their fellow men because they are friends to God, or only because they are friends to them. In a word, all changes in men's circumstances, whether great or small, whether from prosperity to adversity, or from adversity to prosperity, try their hearts, and give them opportunity every day to know whether they are in a state of nature, or in a state of grace.

4. It appears from the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, that it is not strange that religious apostacy has prevailed so much in the world. Apostacy from the true religion soon began after the apostacy of Adam. The first instance was in his family. Cain was an apostate from the true religion. It continued to spread and prevail from that time until the earth was filled with error and violence. After the true religion was revived by the second father of mankind, all the branches of his family soon fell into idolatry, except Abraham. Though the true religion was preserved in his family, yet some branches of it apostatized, and conformed to an idolatrous world. Notwithstanding the strong bulwarks God placed around his people in Judea, yet they were perpetually apostatizing, until ten tribes at once forsook the true God and true religion, and gave themselves up to the grossest errors and delusions. While the apostles were living, the mystery of iniquity began to work, and many individual professors of Christianity made shipwreck of their faith, and turned apostates. Soon after, whole churches apostatized, and openly professed and maintained idolatry. And ever since that day, men have been apostatizing from Christianity to Mohammedism, Ari-

anism, Socinianism, Unitarianism, Deism and Skepticism. So long as the hearts of men are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, there can be no dependence upon the mere profession of the true religion. A mere change of circumstances may lead them to apostatize from the doctrines, the duties and the belief of the true religion. Any errors are more agreeable to the natural heart, than the doctrines and spirit of true religion. It is not strange that men are so easily seduced to apostatize; for all seducers are of the world, and speak of the world, and therefore the world heareth them. It is not strange that there are so many apostacies in our churches at the present day. Many of them have been composed of those who never experienced a change of heart, nor professed to experience such a change; and all such professors are prepared to apostatize when apostate teachers creep in among them. The apostle, speaking of apostates, represents them as acting according to their nature. "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow, that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The heart that is desperately and incurably evil will lead men to pursue evil to their own death.

5. It appears from what has been said, that those are unwise who trust in their own hearts. Solomon does not hesitate to pronounce him a fool, who trusts in his own heart. Since the hearts of men are so extremely wicked and deceitful, they must be extremely unwise to trust them; especially since they have so often been deceived by them. But though they have found their hearts to be wicked and deceitful above all things, they will still trust in their goodness. They imagine that their hearts are so good that they shall never embrace an error which they have disbelieved, and never pursue an evil practice which they have avoided and abhorred. But how many have renounced doctrines which they once believed, and embraced errors which they once disbelieved and avoided! How many have pursued pernicious practices which they once avoided and detested! You can scarcely find an errorist in this land, who did not once believe the truth, and abhor the errors he has embraced. Most of the false teachers once believed the Bible and the doctrines contained in it to be true, and the sentiments they propagate to be false. Most of those who embrace their errors, once disbelieved and rejected them. The greatest corrupters of morals were once moral, and abhorred the evil ways they are now pursuing. Such seducers and corrupters have become what they are, by trusting in their own hearts. And all who trust in their

own hearts are exposed to be led astray by the current of error and corruption. But every sinner is ready to think and say as Hazael did, when the prophet foretold his folly and his fate: "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But God knows the hearts of sinners better than they do themselves. He tells them that their hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He commands them to keep their hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. And he forbids them to deceive themselves, or to be deceived by others.

6. We learn from what has been said, that sinners are never under genuine convictions until they see the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their hearts. There is a very great difference between awakenings and convictions. Sinners are often awakened to see their danger, while they are entirely ignorant of the plague of their own hearts, or that incorrigible obstinacy which is incurable and desperate, and which no means nor moral motives will remove. Accordingly we find awakened sinners anxiously inquiring what they shall do in order to obtain regenerating grace. They think their hearts are already so good that they are willing to do all that is reasonable for them to do in their present situation. They are willing to read and pray, seek and strive, to enter into the strait gate, which is all they suppose God can reasonably require. And they have courage to seek and strive, because they imagine they are sincerely doing their duty, and their hearts are growing better; for they have stronger and stronger desires to be saved. But when the Spirit of God sets home the commandment upon their hearts, which requires disinterested love, and forbids all selfish views, desires and exercises, they are convinced that all their seekings and strivings, hopes and fears, have been entirely selfish and sinful; and instead of recommending them to God, have only exposed them to his greater displeasure. Then sin revives, and their hopes die. Then they see that their selfish hearts have deceived them, and that their selfishness is desperate and incurable. They despair of men and means. They realize that they are out of the reach of all secondary causes, and that they are entirely in the sovereign hand of God, who alone is able to save or destroy, and who will either save them, or leave them to perish with their eyes wide open. They are not prepared to see and feel the grace of God in renewing their hearts and breaking the cords of their iniquity, until they have such genuine convictions of the nature and criminality of their selfish hearts. But sinners under mere awakenings are in the most dangerous situation. It is then their hearts become deceitful above all things, and powerfully persuade them that they are not so guilty as others, and that God will hear their cries

for mercy, and graciously pardon and save them, because they have become better than they once were, and better than others now are. It is always owing to the deceitfulness and blindness of the heart, that sinners ever gain and cherish a false hope. Hence,

7. There is a plain reason why saints are more concerned about sinners than they are about themselves. Saints know that sinners carry about with them hearts full of selfishness and deception, which will lull them into stupidity and security, and dispose them to resist awakenings and convictions, and all means used with them to awaken and convince them. They know that they will reform and relapse, resolve and re-resolve, and still trust in their own hearts, and endeavor by some means or other to establish their own righteousness. It was such a view of the desperate depravity and deception of the human heart, that excited the deep concern of Paul for the sinners in his day. He says: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Saints fear that sinners never will be awakened; and if they are awakened, that they never will be convinced; and if they are convinced, that they never will be converted. They know that while they continue under the entire dominion of a heart full of selfishness and deception, they will love to deceive themselves and to be deceived, and will resist every thing that is said to them or done for them to undeceive them. Though at one time and another they may put on promising appearances occasioned by the change of circumstances, yet they know not what they may be, or what they may do in time to come. For there is no deception in respect to sentiment or practice, that they are not liable to believe and pursue. They see their feet stand on slippery places, and are fearful they will soon slide into destruction. In this light they view sober, regular sinners; and in this light they view the vain, trifling and profane. And it would be well, indeed, if christians were more concerned about sinners than they are; and they would be more concerned about them if they were more concerned about themselves. Let all search and try their hearts; for it is vain to try to conceal them. God says he knows them: "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

SERMON XLI.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

THERE is a sin unto death. — 1 JOHN, v 16

THE apostle is here speaking upon the subject of prayer. He encourages all who believe in Christ, to call upon God with freedom and confidence. He assures them if they pray according to the will of God, either for themselves or others, their prayers shall certainly be heard and answered. But he observes that it is not their duty to pray for any who are known to have committed the sin unto death, because that is a peculiar sin which God has determined never to forgive. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it.* All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death." According to this representation of the sin unto death, it is evidently that sin which our Saviour said should never be forgiven, and that which is commonly called the unpardonable sin. Here it may be proper, first, to point out the peculiar properties of this sin; and then, to inquire why it is unpardonable.

Though few, perhaps, have ever committed the unpardonable sin, yet many have been greatly exercised with apprehensions

of its guilt, and some have been driven to the very borders of despair. Careless and stupid persons have but little dread of sinning the sin unto death; but those of a more tender conscience and gloomy cast of mind are extremely prone to imagine that they have actually sinned beyond the reach of pardoning mercy. It is, therefore, of practical importance, to say something upon this subject which may be suited to remove the groundless fears of some, and to prevent the fatal presumption of others. And for this purpose, it is very necessary,

I. To point out the peculiar properties of the sin unto death. And here I would observe,

1. This sin is directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. Though there be but one true God, yet the scripture represents the one true God as existing in three distinct persons. These are called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and are represented as bearing distinct parts in the work of our redemption. Hence one sin may be more directly pointed against the Father, another more directly pointed against the Son, and another more directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. The transgression of the divine law seems to be more directly pointed against the person of the Father, who assumes the character of Lawgiver. Unbelief more immediately dishonors the person of the Son, who claims the character of Mediator. And open opposition to the appearance of holiness more especially reproaches the person of the Holy Ghost, who performs the office of Sanctifier.

Our Saviour, speaking of the unpardonable sin, observes this distinction of persons in the Godhead; and represents it as more directly pointed against the Holy Ghost, than against either of the other persons in the sacred Trinity. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew we read, "They brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them — Wherefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Our Saviour wrought miracles by the power of the Holy Ghost; and accordingly, he considers the Scribes and Pharisees as blaspheming the Holy Ghost, by ascribing a miracle, wrought by his divine

influence, to the power and agency of the devil. And he repeatedly declares that their sin was unpardonable, not because it was pointed against himself, but against the Holy Ghost. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." And to make the distinction plainer still, he says, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." According to this infallible description of the sin unto death, it is always directly pointed against the Holy Ghost.

2. The sin which shall never be forgiven, is a sin of the tongue. This appears from the express declaration of Christ. In the twelfth of Luke, he says, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that *blasphemeth* against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven." And in the third of Mark, he conveys the same idea, in plainer and stronger terms. "Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." The Evangelist adds, "Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit." Though they had inwardly felt the keenest malice against Christ, yet, if they had not *said*, "He hath an unclean spirit," they would not have blasphemed the Holy Ghost, by whom he wrought miracles, nor consequently have been guilty of the unpardonable sin. Blasphemy properly consists in evil speaking, and can be committed only in words. Though there is a multitude of ways of dishonoring the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, yet there is but one way of blaspheming these divine persons; and that is, by speaking reproachfully of them. And since our Saviour expressly says, that the sin unto death consists in blaspheming the Holy Ghost, we may safely conclude that the unpardonable sin is always a sin of the tongue. This leads me to observe,

3. That the sin which shall never be forgiven is a public, and not a secret sin. Some sins can be committed only in public. The sin of slander, for instance, is of a public nature. One man cannot slander another in secret. The essence of slander consists in one man's speaking falsely of another, with a view to injure his character. But no man can injure another's character without speaking against it in public; or, at least, so as to be heard by somebody besides himself. So blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is a public, and not a secret sin. When the Scribes and Pharisees committed this sin, they spake against the Holy Ghost before a multitude of people, with a

malicious design of sinking his character and miraculous operations in the view of the world. And no man, at this day, can be guilty of the unpardonable sin, without blaspheming the Holy Ghost in public, or speaking against his peculiar operations in the hearing of others. The apostle, in the context, cautions christians against praying for those whom they know to be guilty of the sin unto death. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." This caution, in this connection, plainly supposes that the sin unto death is an open, public sin, which is known to others, as well as to the guilty person.

4. The sin unto death cannot be committed without knowledge of a certain kind. Some suppose that high attainments in human learning, and high degrees of divine illumination, are necessary to render men capable of committing the unpardonable sin. But there seems to be no ground for this supposition. For the Scribes and Pharisees, who charged Christ with having an unclean spirit, and blasphemed the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his operations to the power and agency of the devil, appear to have been no other than the most ignorant and stupid sinners. And it is, indeed, much easier to conceive that the most ignorant and stupid sinners should be guilty of committing the sin unto death, than to conceive that the most enlightened and convinced sinners should openly and directly blaspheme the ever blessed Spirit.

There is, however, a certain kind of knowledge, without which the unpardonable sin cannot be committed; I mean the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, and of his peculiar operations. In the economy of redemption, it is the peculiar office of the holy Spirit to bestow spiritual gifts, and to produce holiness or gracious affections in the human heart. Accordingly we read, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." And again we are told, "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Now a person must *know* these peculiar operations of the Holy Ghost, in order to be capable of committing the unpardonable sin. For the unpardonable sin consists in ascribing any of these peculiar effects of the divine Spirit to the power and operation of the devil. The Scribes and Pharisees committed

the sin unto death, by ascribing the supernatural effect of the Holy Ghost to an unclean spirit, contrary to the knowledge and conviction of their own minds. And it seems as though nothing but ignorance, prevented Paul from committing the sin unto death. He was actually guilty of blasphemy. This he freely acknowledges; but he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." Had he, contrary to his own knowledge, called Christ an impostor, and ascribed his miracles, or the miracles of his apostles, to the power and influence of Satan, he would have *blasphemed* the Holy Ghost, and put himself beyond the reach of pardoning mercy. No person can *ignorantly* commit the unpardonable sin. He must have the knowledge of the Holy Ghost and of his peculiar operations, in order to be capable of committing the sin which shall never be forgiven. I may add,

5. The sin unto death always springs from sensible enmity against the truth and spirit of Christianity. The external sin of blasphemy has its origin in a corrupt and malignant heart. Hence our Lord declares that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." We cannot conceive that any person should knowingly blaspheme the Holy Ghost by ascribing his peculiar operations to the agency of the devil, unless he felt sensible enmity of heart against the Holy Ghost and his holy operations. But we can easily conceive that sinners should feel such enmity of heart against the truth and spirit of Christianity, as knowingly and maliciously to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Elymas the sorcerer, whilst he withstood the apostles, and endeavored to turn away the deputy from the faith, felt a malignant opposition to the truth and spirit of the gospel. This appears from his own conduct, and from that severe and pointed reproof which was given him by Paul. "Then Saul (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes upon him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou *enemy of all righteousness;* wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Since we have no account of what Elymas did or said, we cannot determine whether he did, or did not, commit the unpardonable sin; but this we may certainly conclude, that his heart was malignant enough to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Though mere malignity of heart does not amount to the unpardonable sin, yet nothing but malignity of heart can ever prompt any person knowingly and maliciously to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his holy and supernatural operations to the agency of Satan.

Having described the sin unto death, I proceed to inquire,

II. Why it is unpardonable.

That the sin we have described is unpardonable, there is not the least reason to doubt; since the apostle calls it the sin unto death; and since our Saviour says, it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. We have only to inquire, therefore, why this sin in particular shall never be forgiven.

Here it is natural to observe, in the first place, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be unpardonable on account of any deficiency in the atonement of Christ. The scripture represents Christ as a complete and all-sufficient Saviour. He is said to "taste death for every man." He is said to be "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He is said to be "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." And it is said that his "blood cleanseth from all sin." By dying the just for the unjust, he made a complete atonement for all mankind, and rendered it consistent with the character and government of God, to forgive the greatest, as well as the smallest sinners. Though one sin may be greater than another, and though blasphemy against the Holy Ghost may be the greatest of all sins, yet the blood of Christ is as sufficient to cleanse from this, as from any other sin. This sin, therefore, cannot be unpardonable, on account of any deficiency in the atonement of Christ.

And it is no less evident, in the next place, that it cannot be unpardonable on account of any insurmountable difficulty in the way of bringing the guilty person to repentance. It is true, some sinners are more hardened than others, and perhaps blasphemers are, of all sinners, the most hardened and obstinate; yet there is no reason to imagine that God is unable to conquer the stoutest human heart. He subdued the malignant heart of Manasseh. He softened the hard hearts of the murmuring Jews in Babylon. He cleansed the foul heart of Mary Magdalene. And what is still more striking, he awakened, convinced, and converted Paul, who had been an injurious persecutor, and a profane blasphemer. God is able, in the day of his power, to make any sinner willing to repent. If he saw fit to pardon blasphemers against the Holy Ghost, he could and would bring them to unfeigned repentance. It is not, therefore, in the least degree owing to any peculiar or insurmountable difficulty in the way of God's bringing blasphemers to repentance, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable.

But if the atonement of Christ be sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, and if God be able to bring the greatest sinners to repentance, why is the particular sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unpardonable? I answer, Because it

hath pleased God, by a positive determination to make it so. And though we may not be able to comprehend all the reasons which moved him to make this determination, yet there appears to be one plain and sufficient reason for his absolutely refusing to pardon any person who blasphemeth the Holy Ghost. It is the natural tendency of ascribing the peculiar operations of the Holy Ghost to the power and agency of Satan, to prevent the spread of the gospel and the conversion of sinners. To say that Christ, who had the Spirit without measure, wrought all his miracles by the influence of Satan, had a direct tendency to destroy his religion, and to make him appear in the eye of the world, as a vile and odious impostor. To say that the apostles, who went forth under the influence of the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel and to work miracles, were instigated and assisted by the power of the devil, had the same tendency to defeat their whole design; for they had no higher credentials of their divine mission, than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and the efficacy of the gospel upon the hearts of men. To say at this day, when there is a great effusion of the Spirit, and a great revival of religion, that these effects are owing to the power and delusion of Satan, is directly calculated to prevent the spread of Christianity, and the salvation of sinners. And to ascribe the peculiar operations of the Spirit to the influence of the devil, in any future period, must equally tend to subvert the evidence and design of the gospel. Therefore, to keep the world in awe, God has set a dreadful mark of distinction upon blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and made its penalty death without reprieve.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the description which has been given of the unpardonable sin, that the two noted passages in the sixth and tenth of Hebrews, have no reference to it. To make this appear, it is necessary to recite these texts at large, and consider them distinctly. The first is this. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The second, which follows, is very similar. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under

two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace!"

These texts have often been supposed to be descriptive of the unpardonable sin; and in this view, they have given great distress to awakened sinners, laboring under a deep sense of their own vileness and the divine displeasure. But there appears to be no reason to understand these passages in this sense. There is a very great dissimilarity between the sins here described, and that which has been described in this discourse. The sins here described appear to be secret sins; but the unpardonable sin can be committed in public only. The sins here described appear to be sins of the heart; but the unpardonable sin is a sin of the tongue. The sins here described appear to consist in internal opposition to truth and holiness; but the unpardonable sin consists in nothing but blasphemy, directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. In short, there is no mention nor description of the unpardonable sin in these passages, and therefore, there is no ground to suppose that the apostle is here speaking to sinners, and warning them against the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; which consists in ascribing his peculiar operations to the power and agency of Satan. But on the other hand, the apostle appears to be speaking to saints, and warning them against the guilt and danger of final apostacy. This is the sin which he expressly mentions, and which is peculiar to saints. Though sinners may quench the Spirit, stifle convictions, and run to the greatest excess in wickedness, yet they cannot irrecoverably fall away, this side of eternity. Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, and many other loose and abandoned sinners, have been converted from the error of their ways, and brought to genuine repentance. But *if* real saints should be guilty of falling away from the faith and practice of Christianity, they would sin beyond repentance and pardon. Accordingly the persons whom the apostle addresses in these passages appear to be real saints; for none but such ever arrived at those high attainments which he expressly mentions. It is peculiar to saints, to receive the knowledge of the truth, to be divinely enlightened, to taste of the heavenly gift, to be partakers of the Holy Ghost, to taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. Persons of this character may be properly warned of the danger of falling away. It is the language of both the Old and New Testament, that if real saints should renounce religion, they would be infallibly lost. The prophet Ezekiel says, "When

the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in the sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." Our Lord says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." And Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." It appears from these representations, that if real saints should totally apostatize from their faith and profession, they would never be recovered from their apostacy, but eventually perish. And this is the very sentiment contained in the passages under consideration. But some may ask, Is not the danger of saints' falling away, inconsistent with the doctrine of their final perseverance? I answer, No. David was in danger of being slain by Saul, who determined, if possible, to take away his life. And he realized his danger, when he said, "Surely I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." And there is no doubt but he would have actually fallen by the hand of Saul, if he had not taken peculiar care and precaution to escape his subtile stratagems and violent assaults. But all the while Saul was pursuing David and attempting to destroy him, it was absolutely certain that David should live, and succeed him on the throne of Israel. For God had anointed David to be ruler over his people, and had promised to put the reins of government into his hands. So God has promised to keep all true saints from actual apostacy, and to conduct them safely to his heavenly kingdom. But though the power and faithfulness of God be engaged in their favor, yet they must watch, and pray, and take heed lest they fall. And upon this principle, the apostle solemnly warns them, in the texts under consideration, not against the unpardonable sin in particular, but against the sin of final apostacy, or a total renunciation of Christianity.

2. If what has been said is true, then sinners have no ground to imagine that they have committed the unpardonable sin, because they have *inwardly* opposed God, and resisted the strivings of the Spirit. No inward exercises of heart, however strong and sensible and criminal, ever amount to the sin unto death, which is an external sin of the tongue. Though sinners under the strivings of the Spirit do actually feel enmity against God, and sensibly resist convictions, yet so long as they suppress their feelings, and never utter them in *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost, they do not sin unto death. All sin-

ners are totally depraved. They have a carnal mind which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It is their nature, therefore, always to resist the Holy Ghost, and to endeavor to stifle convictions. They hate the light, and are extremely unwilling to come to the light, lest their hearts should be discovered, and their deeds reproved. But under the awakening and convincing influences of the Spirit, they are obliged to come to the light; and in this situation, it is as natural for their hearts to rise in direct and violent opposition to God and divine truth, as for a corrupt fountain to send forth corrupt streams. There are, indeed, no thoughts nor exercises of heart too malignant for them to feel, in the clear view of their guilt and danger. They may hate their own existence, and wish to be annihilated. They may hate the divine existence, and wish to dethrone and destroy the Most High. But neither these, nor any other internal exercises of the carnal mind, partake of the nature of the unpardonable sin, which essentially consists in blasphemous words, and not in blasphemous thoughts. There is reason to believe that some persons, who have felt the most malignant exercises of heart, have notwithstanding obtained the pardoning mercy of God. It is certain, however, that some eminent christians in appearance, have given this account of themselves, and there is nothing in scripture nor reason to contradict their account. Though it be extremely criminal to quench the Spirit and stifle convictions, yet there is nothing unpardonable in such inward exercises of heart. Those sinners, therefore, who are conscious of the most malignant feelings towards God and divine objects, have no right to conclude that they have committed the sin unto death, and have put themselves beyond the reach of divine mercy.

3. If what has been said is true, then it is altogether criminal for any to despair of salvation, who have not committed the unpardonable sin. Since God has promised to pardon all penitent sinners except blasphemers against the Holy Ghost, it must be altogether criminal in any others to despair of forgiveness, on account of the greatness of their guilt. So long as sinners remain secure and stupid, they are too apt to presume upon the mercy of God; but when they are awakened to attend to their hearts, and to the nature, number and aggravations of their sins, they are too prone to despair of salvation. They appear to themselves so vile and guilty, that they imagine a holy and just God must make them completely and eternally miserable. But these apprehensions are altogether groundless and criminal. What if they have cast off fear, and restrained prayer? what if they have walked in the ways of their heart

and in the sight of their eyes? what if they have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? what if they have hated instruction and despised reproof? what if they have resisted the Spirit, and rejected the counsel of God against themselves? yea, what if in reality they are the very chief of sinners? yet if they now heartily repent, and return to God upon his own terms, he will freely and abundantly pardon. For he makes no distinction between great sinners and small, in the offers of salvation. He freely promises forgiveness and acceptance to all who repent, and submit to the terms of life. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The more the guilt of sinners has abounded, the more the grace of God can abound in their forgiveness. Those who have indulged the most virulent enmity against God, and the cause and friends of Christ, may, like penitent Paul, obtain mercy. Those who have long abused the patience of God, and grown gray in their sins, may, like penitent Manasseh, be received at the eleventh hour. The vilest sinner, upon repentance, may turn the greatness of his guilt into an argument for mercy, and in the language of David, say, "Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great.*" To despair of salvation, therefore, on account of aggravated guilt, is extremely criminal in the most ill deserving sinners. Their despondency is a reproach both upon the mercy and faithfulness of God. It is so far from being an expression of real humility, that, on the other hand, it is a real justification of their present impenitency and unbelief. It is a practical declaration that they would rather it should be owing to past than to present obstinacy, that they are denied divine mercy. But God has ordered it so in the gospel, that nothing but *present* opposition to the offers of life can exclude the most unworthy and guilty sinner from the kingdom of heaven. All things are ready on God's part; and therefore let sinners, instead of murmuring and desponding, "hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

4. If blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, then it seriously concerns all sinners to beware of committing this unpardonable sin. It appears from what has been said, that it is a sin which may be committed at this day, as well as in the primitive days of Christianity. It consists in ascribing the peculiar operations of the Holy Ghost to the power and agency of Satan. And though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have long since ceased, yet his gracious and sanctifying influences still continue. There have been many remarkable

seasons of the outpouring of the Spirit in these latter ages. And should such a season come again in this land, when the awakening, convincing, converting and comforting influences of the Spirit should be very common and very powerful, and should any virulently oppose this good work of the holy Spirit, and *knowingly* ascribe it to the power and delusion of Satan, there is no reason to doubt but they would blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and bring upon themselves unpardonable guilt. It behooves sinners, therefore, to keep at the greatest distance from this fatal sin. Let them avoid all appearance of it, and shun every way of sinning which leads to it, or stands more nearly connected with it. In particular, let them beware of despising religion, of trifling with the name of God, and of profaning his day, his house, his word and sacred ordinances. The transition is easy from these sins to the sin unto death. Those who have habituated themselves to despise and profane divine objects in general, are in peculiar danger of blaspheming the Holy Ghost in particular, whenever they have an opportunity of seeing his peculiar and powerful operations upon the hearts of men. Let no sinners, therefore, dare to trifle with sacred things, lest they should be left in awful judgment to themselves, to speak a word against the Holy Ghost, the penalty for which is death without reprieve.

PART XII.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

SERMONS XLII.—XLIII.

SERMON XLII.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO HIS OWN DIVINITY.

Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. — John, x. 33.

There have been various opinions of our Saviour, ever since his first appearance in the flesh. Not only Herod, but all Jerusalem, were troubled with anxiety and doubt, when they heard the news of his birth. Mary herself hardly knew what opinion to form of her child, when she heard and pondered the saying of the angels who had announced him to the world as Christ the Lord. And when the appointed time was come that he should emerge from the obscurity of private life, and appear in his public character, those who heard his doctrines and saw his miracles, were very much divided in their opinions about such an extraordinary personage. Some said he was John the Baptist; some said he was Elias; some said he was Jeremiah, or one of the prophets; and some said he was the Son of the living God. But though this last opinion was believed by his disciples, and propagated by the first preachers of the gospel, after his ascension to heaven, yet new and strange opinions of Christ soon sprang up and spread among his professed followers. Some denied his humanity; some denied his divinity; and some denied both. This diversity of opinions concerning the Founder of our holy religion proved the unhappy occasion of long and sharp disputes in the christian church. And though a milder spirit now prevails among christians, yet they are far from being united in their sentiments about the personal character of their common Saviour. Four different opinions upon this subject, divide them into four different denominations. These are commonly called, for the sake of distinction, Socin-

ians, Arians, Unitarians and Trinitarians. The Socinians believe that Christ was but a mere man, though favored with the gift of inspiration. The Arians make him more than a man, and suppose him to be possessed of every divine perfection except self existence and independence. The Unitarians view him as a super-angelic Nature, intimately united with the one true God. The Trinitarians conceive him to be a proper man mysteriously united with the second person in the Godhead. But notwithstanding this variety of opinions concerning Christ, all his professed followers agree that he was possessed of perfect purity and moral rectitude. And since they agree in the belief of his undoubted veracity, they ought to agree that his own declarations concerning himself should settle their long and unhappy dispute. His enemies say, in our text, that he professed to be God as well as man. "Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." These words very naturally lead us to consider what Christ did say concerning his humanity and divinity, and the grounds upon which he asserted both.

I. Let us consider what Christ said concerning his humanity.

He was born of a woman. He gradually increased in stature and knowledge, until he reached the years of manhood. He then appeared and conversed like other men. And when he had occasion to speak of himself, he used a peculiar phrase which clearly and forcibly expressed his humanity. He commonly called himself *the Son of man.* I will mention a number of instances. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." "The Son of man came eating and drinking." "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead." "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" It is needless to transcribe all the passages in which Christ calls himself the Son of man, since he calls himself so more than sixty times in the New Testament. By this phrase he always meant to assert his humanity. And the Jews always understood it in this sense. For they charged him with blasphemy, because he professed to be a man, and yet made himself God. If they had mistaken his meaning, he must have certainly known it, and as certainly rectified their mistake. But it does not appear that he ever intimated to any person that he had been misunderstood in calling himself the Son of man. By this phrase, therefore, he must have intended to assert his true and proper humanity.

II. Let us consider what he said concerning his divinity.

Though he professed to be man, yet he made himself God; and said more about his divine, than about his human nature. He said a great many things by which he meant, either directly or indirectly, to assert his divinity. Here it may be observed, in the first place, that he called himself the Son of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, it is he that talketh with thee." "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." In all these passages Christ means to assert his divinity, by calling himself the Son of God. And he means to convey the same idea of himself, by calling God his Father. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father." "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." "But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." I might go on quoting passages of this import; for Christ calls God his Father more than fifty times in the four Evangelists. This mode of speaking was very offensive to the Jews, who understood him as asserting his divinity. Accordingly we read, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Again,

Christ used another phrase which carried the idea of his divinity. He used frequently to say, that he was *one with the Father*. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may know that thou hast sent me." "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one." By this union with his Father, the Jews understood him to assert his divine nature. Hence we are told, when he said on a certain occasion, "I and my Father are one," that "the Jews took up

stones to stone him." Just after this he said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." It is added, "Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand." Again,

Christ used an expression which fairly implied his *eternity*, and consequently his divinity; and being taken in this sense, it highly displeased the Jews. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them: *Before Abraham was, I am.* Then took they up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Again,

Our Lord professed to be a divine person, by claiming a divine authority to *forgive sins*. "And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Again,

It belongs to a divine person to perform divine *works;* and such, Christ professed to perform. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He said, he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again. He said, he had power to raise the dead, or quicken whom he would. He wrought miracles in his own name, and by his own power. When he was requested to work a miracle, his usual reply was, *I will*, and then wrought the miracle desired. The prophets wrought miracles in the name of God, and the apostles in the name of Christ. But Christ wrought miracles in his own name, which was a public and explicit profession of his divinity.

Moreover, many persons who came to our Saviour paid him divine *homage*, for which he never rebuked them. "And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, saying, I will, be thou clean." We are told, "There came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, my daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him." When

Christ had walked upon the sea, saved Peter from drowning, and came into the ship, "then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him." The women, who met him after his resurrection, as they were returning from the sepulchre, "came and held him by his feet, and worshipped him." The eleven disciples conducted themselves in the same manner in Galilee, for "when they saw him, they worshipped him." And when believing Thomas said unto him, "My Lord and my God," Jesus approved and commended his faith and worship. In such various ways, and by such various forms of speech, our Saviour made himself God. And to give his expressions their full force, it may be proper to observe,

In the first place, that they convinced the Jews that he *meant* to assert his divinity. When he inquired why they went about to stone him, they replied, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." The Jews, who knew their own language, would never have charged Christ with blasphemy, unless he had used expressions concerning himself which properly conveyed the idea of divinity. But when they heard him say that he was the Son of God; that God was his Father; that he and his Father were one; that he did the works of his Father; that he had power to raise the dead; that he had authority to forgive sins; and that it was the will of God, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father; it was extremely natural for them to believe that he meant to make himself God as well as man. And this leads me to observe,

In the second place, that Christ never contradicted his professions of divinity, nor explained them in any sense different from that in which they were understood. Though he was blamed, and even charged with blasphemy, for making himself God; yet he never denied that he was a divine person, nor that he had professed to be so. But if he had not been a divine person, and had never intended to convey this idea of himself, then it was highly incumbent upon him to explain his meaning, and undeceive those whom he had deceived by his unusual and improper expressions. And this we presume he would have done, had he been a mere man of common honesty. Honest men have always been very careful not to claim, nor even to receive, divine honors. When Pharaoh told Joseph, "I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it; Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." When Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel whether he could interpret his dream, Daniel replied, "As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." When Cornelius

met Peter, "and fell down at his feet and worshipped him; Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." When the Lycaonians were about to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, the apostles rectified the mistake, and rejected their impious honors. And when the apostle John was about to worship an angel, the angel rebuked him, "saying, see thou do it not: *worship God.*" Now if Christ were not a divine person, and yet knew that he was taken to be divine by those who conversed with him, and that too in consequence of his own expressions, how could he consistently, with a proper regard to them, to himself and to his Maker, neglect to rectify their great and dangerous mistake? To have neglected this, would have proved him to be not only destitute of the virtue of the prophets and apostles, but to possess the vanity of Herod, who was struck by the hand of Heaven for receiving that honor which was due to God only. Since, therefore, Christ never contradicted his professions of divinity, nor attempted to explain them differently from what they were understood to mean, we are constrained to conclude that he was, in truth, what his expressions naturally implied and conveyed, a divine person. Especially, if we consider once more,

That he justified himself in professing to be a divine person, and persisted in that profession in the full view of death. When the Jews charged him with blasphemy for making himself God, he boldly justified his conduct. "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." Indeed, he was so willing to justify his pretensions to divinity, that he once proposed the question himself, on purpose to confound and silence the Pharisees upon this subject. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son? And no man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man from that day forth, ask him any more questions." Nor did he barely justify his claim to divinity, but even persisted in the claim, when he knew it would cost him his life. After he was apprehended and brought before the high priest, the capital charge laid against him was his professing to be *a divine person.* It is true, they accused him before Pilate, of professing to be a King. But before the high priest and ecclesiastical court,

they charged him with no other crime than that of blasphemy, in making himself God. Accordingly, "the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what farther need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy, what think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Thus Christ professed to be a divine person while he lived; and when he died, he sealed his testimony with his own blood. It is as certain, therefore, that he possessed divinity, as that he possessed the least degree of truth, or moral sincerity.

It only remains to consider,

III. Upon what grounds Christ asserted both his humanity and divinity.

And here, in the first place, let us inquire upon what foundation he asserted his humanity. Was it simply because he was born of a woman, and had a body of human shape and size? This is what some suppose. But is this supposition credible? Does a mere human body, born of a woman, though destitute of a human soul, constitute a human person? Adam was a man, though he never was born. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are men, though their bodies have been long since separated from their souls. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that Christ would assert his humanity upon the mere ground of his being born of a woman, and having only a human body. A human soul without a human body might have constituted him a man. But a human body without a human soul could not have given him the essence of humanity. This leads us to conclude that he asserted his humanity upon the just foundation of having "a true body and a reasonable soul," united in the same manner as the soul and body are united in other men. And if he had a human soul united with a human body, then he may be as properly denominated a man, as any of his progenitors, whose names are mentioned in the first chapter of Matthew.

Let us next consider the ground upon which he asserted his divinity.

He could not pretend to be a divine person upon Socinian ground, which is that of divine inspiration. A divine person has no occasion of being divinely inspired. This the Socinians allow, and therefore do not consider Christ as a divine person because he had the gift of inspiration, but place him upon a level with other inspired men.

Nor could he assert his divinity upon Arian ground; which

is, that he possessed all divine excellences except self existence and independence. For, however great the powers and capacities of a dependent being may be, yet he cannot possess a single attribute which may be properly called divine. The Arians run into a plain absurdity, which the Socinians avoid. The Socinians deny that any being is divine, who is destitute of self existence and independence; but the Arians maintain that a being may be divine who wants both these incommunicable attributes of the Deity. They plead that Christ possessed divine power, wisdom and goodness, though he was absolutely dependent, and derived his being and all his powers from the supreme God and Father of all. But it is totally inconceivable that a derived, dependent nature, should really possess any of those divine perfections which essentially belong to an underived, independent, self existent Being. No communications from God to Christ could make him a divine person. Nor could any intercourse with the Deity, however near and intimate, make him a Deity. So that no excellences and perfections of his nature, short of self existence and independence, could justify him in asserting his divinity.

Nor could he pretend to be a divine person upon Unitarian ground; which is, that he was only a super-angelic Nature united with a human body, and sent by the one only true God to perform the work of redemption. Upon this hypothesis, he could assert neither his humanity nor divinity; for he was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a Deity; but a being *sui generis*—of a peculiar kind. Accordingly, the Unitarians do not pretend that he was a Deity, or possessed of any truly divine attributes. And we cannot suppose that he would assert his divinity upon a ground which was not just, and which the Unitarians themselves suppose was not sufficient to support such an assertion.

There remains no other ground, therefore, upon which he could assert his divinity, but that of his being God and man, in two distinct natures and one person. A personal union between his divine and human nature would properly constitute him a divine person. And it appears from his own expressions, that he did assert his divinity upon this ground. He says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." Here he represents his one individual person as being both in heaven and on earth, at one and the same time. And upon the supposition of his human and divine natures being personally united, he might properly say this; but upon no other supposition. A prophet could not say this, in his nearest approaches to God. Paul could not say this, when he was caught up to the third heaven. An angel could not say this, either in heaven or on earth. Nor could Christ say this, unless his human nature were

personally united with the divine. Any other union, however near and intimate, could not justify him, who was a man, in making himself God.

But here it may be inquired what is meant by Christ's human nature's being personally united with his divine nature. It is easy to say what is not meant by it. It does not mean that his human nature was made divine nature. Omnipotence could not transform his humanity into divinity, because that would be the same as to produce divinity, or create a Creator. But supposing his human nature could have been made divine nature; yet that would have prevented his being God and man in two natures and but one person, which is what he professed to be.

Nor, on the other hand, does his human nature's being personally united with his divine nature, mean that his divine nature was made human nature. For there was the same impossibility of degrading his divinity into humanity, as of exalting his humanity into divinity. And could this have been done, it would have equally prevented his being what he professed to be, God and man in one person.

Nor does his human nature's being personally united with his divine nature, mean that his two natures were mixed or blended together. For it evidently appears from scripture that he personally possessed every divine perfection and every human quality, except sin. He discovered, in the course of his life, human ignorance and divine knowledge; human wants and divine fulness; human weakness and divine power; human dependence and divine independence.

But, if the personal union of the two natures in Christ does not mean, that his humanity became divinity nor his divinity became humanity, nor that these were mixed or blended together, then the question still recurs, what is meant by Christ's being one person in two natures? I answer, the man Jesus, who had a true body and a reasonable soul, was united with the second person in the Trinity, in such a manner as laid a foundation for him to say with propriety that he was man, that he was God, and that he was both God and man; and as laid a foundation also to ascribe what he did as God and suffered as man, to one and the self same person. If any should here ask, how could his two natures be thus personally united? We can only say, it is a mystery. And there is no avoiding a mystery with respect to Christ. His conception was a mystery. And if we admit the mystery of his conception, why should we hesitate to admit the mystery of the personal union between his two natures? If we only admit this, all Christ said concerning himself is easy and intelligible. Being a man, he might with propriety make himself God.

I shall now close the subject with a few serious remarks.

1. To deny the divinity of Christ, is virtually to impeach his moral character. He knew that there was a great variety of opinions entertained of him. Many inquired at his own mouth what manner of person he was. In several instances he was pleased to answer them in terms sufficiently plain and unequivocal. And though they objected against his answers as extremely impious, yet he never contradicted or softened them. In this manner he treated the grand question concerning his divinity, for several years. At last the subject became more serious. The Jews conspired against him, and arraigned him before their highest ecclesiastical court, where they accused him of blasphemy, for making himself God. The high priest, in order to come at the truth of the case, laid him under the solemnity of an oath, and commanded him to say in sincerity whether he had ever professed to be a divine person. In that peculiar situation, while the oath of God was upon him, and death itself before him, he confirmed and repeated his pretensions to divinity, and appealed to the day of judgment to sanction his declarations. There is now no need of farther evidence that he solemnly professed to be a divine person; and therefore we cannot call his divinity in question, without joining with the Jews and impeaching his moral character. His declarations are recorded, and carry the same authority now that they did when they were uttered, and when they confounded his opposers. It will not save the appearance of modesty to plead that we do not mean to contradict, but only to explain his expressions. It is now too late to explain Christ's words upon this subject; because he has, in the most plain and solemn manner, explained them himself. Hence there is only this alternative before us, either to believe his divinity, or to deny his veracity. But to deny his veracity upon this subject, is to blast his whole moral character, and to represent him in as odious a light as ever the Jews did, when they called him a blasphemer, and said he was mad and had a devil. To impeach the moral character of Christ is extremely criminal. For it is not only blaspheming his name, but denying his religion. To say that Christ was a blasphemer, is to say that Christianity is a falsehood. If there was no truth in Christ, there is no truth in his religion. Hence it seriously concerns those who deny the divinity of Christ, impeach his character, and subvert his gospel, to prepare to meet him when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and settle the solemn dispute between them.

2. To deny the divinity of Christ, is virtually to set up human reason against divine revelation. The Bible so plainly represents Christ to be a divine person, that none would hesi-

tate to believe his divinity, if they could only comprehend the mystery of his being God and man in two natures, and yet but one person. This was the stumbling block to the Jews. They could not comprehend how Christ, being a man, could make himself God; or how he could say, when he was not fifty years old, "before Abraham was, I am." And this is the stumbling block to those who now deny the divinity of Christ. The mystery contained in this doctrine leads them to explain away the plainest passages of scripture in favor of it, and to bend all their force to prove that the personal union between the two natures of Christ is a plain and palpable absurdity. A late writer, when he is reminded that the apostles maintained the doctrine of Christ's divinity, scruples not to say, "As it is not pretended that there are any miracles adapted to prove that Christ made and supports the world, I do not see that we are under any obligation to believe it, merely because it was an opinion held by an apostle." He adds, "It is not, certainly, from a few casual expressions, which so easily admit of other interpretations, and especially in epistolary writings, that we can be authorized that such was the serious opinion of the apostles. But *if it had been their real opinion*, it would not follow that *it was true*, unless the teaching of it should appear to be included in their general commission, with which, as I have shown, it has no sort of connection."

But is it safe for men to lean to their own understanding, in opposition to the plainest declarations of scripture? Let experience speak. Some have made the trial upon this important subject; but greatly to their own disadvantage. For their attempt to avoid the seeming inconsistency of Christ's divinity, has driven them into a number of most plain and palpable absurdities. By denying him to be God as well as man, they have been obliged to ascribe such things to his humanity, as properly and necessarily belong to his divinity. This will clearly appear in a variety of instances.

The scripture represents Christ as existing from eternity. But this they are obliged partly to acknowledge and partly to deny; and so maintain that he neither existed from eternity nor yet had a beginning of existence; which is a plain absurdity. The scripture represents Christ as creating the world, which belongs to him as God. But this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. The scripture represents Christ as governing the world, which belongs to him as God. But this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. The scripture represents Christ as having power to raise the dead at the general resurrection, which belongs to him as God. But this they are obliged to

ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. The scripture represents Christ as being able to judge the secrets of all hearts at the last day, which belongs to him as God. But this they are obliged to ascribe to him as man; which is a plain absurdity. All these absurdities necessarily result from denying the divinity of Christ, and applying those things to him as man, which belong to him as God.

If it should be allowed, for once, that the doctrine of Christ's divinity is really absurd, yet it is by no means so plain and palpable an absurdity, as these which have been mentioned. For it is much easier to conceive that humanity and divinity should be personally united in Christ, than to conceive that a mere dependent nature should never begin to exist; or that such a dependent nature should be able to create the world, to govern the world, to judge the world, and to raise the dead. We can clearly see that a being inferior to the Deity cannot perform such divine works; but we cannot clearly see that humanity and divinity could not be personally united in the great Emmanuel. As soon as men set up their own reason against divine revelation, they break over a sacred enclosure, and take the liberty to reason themselves into one absurdity after another, until they insensibly fall into the gulf of skepticism. "Those who will believe nothing, the *manner* and *causes* of which they cannot comprehend, must be in the way to believe nothing at all." To avoid this dangerous error, let us be content to give God his place, and to take our own. Let us be willing to allow that "the weakness of God is stronger than men; and the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

It is natural to remark in the last place,

3. That the establishment of Christ's divinity establishes the beauty and consistency of his whole character and conduct. It is this which demonstrates the rectitude of his moral character; and so renders him worthy of the respect and imitation of the Socinians themselves. It is this which gives value to his death, and so renders him a complete and all sufficient Saviour. It is this which reconciles all the great things ascribed to him by the prophets and the apostles. It is this which renders him worthy of the humble homage and praises of all the hosts of heaven. It is this which establishes the truth and importance of the gospel. It is this which ratifies the truth of those great and precious promises that remain to be fulfilled, and assures us that religion shall have a long and universal reign. It is this which affords permanent light and consolation to all good men, while passing through the dark and dreary journey of life. In a word, it is the Divinity of Christ which spreads a lustre over the face of the world, and calls upon Zion to rejoice that her God reigneth.

SERMON XLIII.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Luke, ii. 52.

These words are intimately connected with the whole of the preceding chapter, which contains a large and particular account of the time, place, and circumstances of Christ's birth; of the proclamation by the angels of the great and joyful event; of the peculiar ceremonies of his dedication to God; of his early attendance on the Passover; and of his uncommon growth in wisdom and stature, as well as in favor with God and man. The text, taken in connection with all these things, naturally leads us to conclude,

That Jesus Christ was really man.

It is certain, however, that the humanity, as well as divinity of Christ, has been called in question. This was one of the first heresies that sprang up in the christian church. A sect called the Docetæ denied that Christ had a true body and reasonable soul, or that he literally hungered, thirsted, suffered and died. To this heresy, it is supposed the apostle John aludes in his first epistle, where he says, "Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And this is that spirit of anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now is already in the world." Though few, if any at this day, deny that Christ had a human body, yet some noted divines deny that he had a human soul, which is virtually denying his proper and essential humanity. It is,

therefore, a point worthy of serious consideration, whether Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared in the character of Mediator, and died without the gates of Jerusalem, was really *man*. If we search the New Testament, we shall find that the inspired writers have said a great many things which clearly prove the real humanity of Christ. He is there called man, and the Son of man, more than forty times by himself and others. He appeared in fashion as a man, and was taken to be such, by all who beheld him and conversed with him. Though some thought he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, others that he was Elias, others that he was Jeremias or one of the prophets, yet none doubted whether he was really man, and one of the descendants of Adam. Accordingly Josephus, and all profane historians who have mentioned Jesus of Nazareth, have always spoken of him as really man, and generally nothing more than man. This is such evidence of Christ's humanity as might well be considered full and satisfactory. But since I propose to treat this subject distinctly and largely, I shall enter into a more particular consideration of the evidence of Christ's being really man.

Here it may be observed,

I. That he was really man because he had a human body. It was formed and fashioned in his mother's womb by the great Parent of all flesh. So it was, says the inspired writer, that while his mother was at Bethlehem, "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes." This representation plainly supposes that Christ's body was truly human, and was derived in the ordinary way from human nature. And this is farther corroborated by the account given of his increase in corporeal stature and magnitude through the several stages of infancy, childhood and youth, to complete manhood, by the same means of nourishment by which other children come to maturity. Christ's body appears to have been in every respect similar to that of other men. It was subject to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, hunger and thirst, strength and weakness, and to every corporeal infirmity which does not arise from human depravity. His having such a human body is a strong presumptive evidence that he had a human soul, which was necessary to constitute him a real man.

II. He was really man, because he had a human soul as well as a human body. This is necessarily implied in what is said of him in the text. He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Here both his wisdom and piety are asserted; and we know that these are properties of the soul, and not of the body. He possessed every

intellectual power and faculty which was necessary to constitute him a free, voluntary, moral agent, and capable of that wisdom and piety which rendered him perfectly amiable in the sight of God and man. And his growing in wisdom and holiness is a conclusive evidence that he possessed the same kind of intellectual powers and faculties which are peculiar to a human soul, that gradually comes to maturity. Though his mind strengthened and expanded gradually, yet it strengthened and expanded rapidly, and made greater progress in knowledge and virtue than other children of the same age and under similar advantages. There is no doubt but that his pious parents instructed him as early and as well as they were capable. It is to be presumed that they taught him to speak and to read, and improved every opportunity of imparting useful instruction into his attentive and docile mind. He heard them from day to day read the word of God, and call upon his name. He was soon capable of reading the scriptures himself, and of understanding what the prophets had said concerning his character, his office, and mediatorial conduct. He early knew much more concerning these great things than his parents. This appears from his extraordinary conversation with the Jewish teachers in the temple, who were astonished at his understanding and answers; and from his reply to the gentle reproof of his mother for tarrying behind in the temple: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" His improvements in knowledge were surprising to all who heard him preach. While he taught in the temple, "the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Though he employed most of his time in a laborious occupation with his father, yet he found many leisure seasons and opportunities, which other children and youths, and even men, spend in trifling, that he wisely improved in reading, and contemplating upon the most important and divine subjects. And if we consider the purity of his heart, the strength of his mind, and the rectitude of all his views, desires, and pursuits, it is natural to conclude that his human soul, though at first weak and feeble, would gradually and rapidly increase, wax strong, and be filled with spiritual and divine wisdom. This account of Christ's mental improvements affords infallible evidence that he possessed not an angelic, or super-angelic, but a *human* soul, which being united with a human body, constituted him in the strictest sense a real man.

III. That Christ was properly a human person will appear, if we consider the state and circumstances in which he was placed while he lived in this world. For,

1. He was fixed in a state of dependence. This he repeat-

edly and plainly acknowledged. "Then Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." Again he said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." And again, "The words I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." These are plain expressions of his dependence upon his Father. And it was upon this ground that he so frequently and devoutly prayed to his Father. Prayer always implies dependence upon him to whom it is addressed. The prayers of Christ, therefore, prove that he lived and moved and had his being in God, as really as other men, and was as much dependent upon him for divine assistance, direction and preservation, through the whole course of his life, as any other of the human race. He prayed for divine direction in the choice of his twelve disciples. He prayed for divine assistance to raise Lazarus from the grave. He prayed for Peter and for all his apostles and followers at the last passover he ever attended. And he prayed to be divinely strengthened and supported through all his agonies in the garden and his sufferings on the cross. His continual prayers were a continual and practical expression of his state of dependence during his continuance on earth; and his dependence was a demonstration of his real humanity.

2. He was placed under law, which implies that he was a human moral agent, and accountable to God like other men. We are told that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Christ was as much bound as any other man by the divine law, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself. As a child, he was bound to obey his father and mother. As a Jew, he was bound to observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. As a subject, he was bound to obey magistrates and all the higher powers. And as a dependent creature, he was bound to obey the whole will of his Creator. There was not a divine law existing in his day, but what bound him to universal and perfect obedience, as much as any other man. This he knew, and accordingly paid a strict, cheerful and constant obedience to every divine precept and prohibition. He said, "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And his Father proclaimed by a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When he came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be bap-

tized of him, "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." "It *becometh us*," that is, it becometh me as well as others, to fulfil all righteousness, by universal obedience to the divine commands. And this he more expressly declared in his sermon on the mount. "Think not that I come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." And again he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." No law, whether human or divine, can bind any but those to whom it is given. So the apostle declares with respect to the divine law. "What thing soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." If Christ had not been man, he could not have been made under the law to man. But he was made under the law to man, which demonstrates that he was really man. I must add,

3. That Christ was placed, like all other men, in a state of probation from his birth to his death. His own eternal happiness, as well as the eternal happiness of mankind, was suspended upon his entire, constant and persevering obedience through life. If he had failed in one point, he would have forfeited the divine favor, defeated the great design he came to accomplish, and plunged himself in hopeless ruin. Disobedience in him would have been far more criminal than disobedience in any other man, and would have drawn after it far more fatal consequences. This is what is meant by his being in a state of probation. For any person is strictly and properly in a state of probation, when future good or evil is suspended upon his future conduct. Thus Solomon placed Shimei in a state of probation, when he suspended his life or death upon the condition of his keeping within, or going beyond, the bounds he had set him. So God the Father made great and precious promises to Christ, upon the condition of his perfect faithfulness in performing the work of redemption; and such conditional promises of good placed him in a state of probation, in respect to his future conduct. His Father promised, in the forty-second of Isaiah, to strengthen and uphold him in his great and arduous mediatorial work. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that

created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." In the fifty-third chapter of this prophecy, the Father promises to reward him for his obedience and sufferings. After representing God as bruising and grieving him, by making his soul an offering for sin, the prophet introduces the Father as saying, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great; and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered among the transgressors." This was the joy set before Christ, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame. Accordingly, just before his death, he claimed the fulfilment of the promises which his Father had made to him upon condition of his perfect and persevering obedience. He says to him, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This promise the apostle tells us the Father has actually fulfilled. He says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Thus God the Father treated Christ as having been perfectly faithful through his whole probationary state. Besides, it is expressly said that Christ was placed in a state of probation, to qualify him for his mediatorial work. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.—For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful

high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Accordingly we find that Christ actually passed through the most fiery trials. He was tried in the wilderness by Satan, who offered him the whole world if he would only worship him. He was tried by his enemies. He was tried by his disciples. He was tried in the garden. He was tried before the tribunal of Pilate. And he was still more severely tried on the cross. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief from his birth to his death. Thus it appears that Christ was really man, as he had a human body, a human soul, and a dependent nature, and was made under law, and placed in a state of dependence and probation. The inspired writers have given us as clear, as full, and as positive evidence of the humanity of Christ, as of any truth or fact they have recorded concerning any man they have mentioned.

I now proceed to improve the subject.

1. If Christ was really man, then the Arian notion of his preëxistence before he came into the world is entirely unscriptural and absurd. The Arians suppose that Christ was the first and noblest of created beings, and existed before the foundation of the world. They suppose that this preëxistent spirit was united with the body of Christ, and supplied the place of a human soul, and enabled Christ to do and suffer all that he did and suffered to perform the part of a Mediator and Redeemer. And upon this ground they deny that he possessed any real divinity, or was the second person in the Trinity, united with humanity. They hold that Christ was neither God nor man, but an intermediate being. In this, they principally differ from proper Socinians and grosser Unitarians. These maintain that Christ had a true body and reasonable soul, and was properly man and no more than man. But the Arians suppose that though Christ had a real human body, yet it was united with a super-angelic soul, which existed, they know not how long, before the creation of the world and its union with the babe of Bethlehem. But if the babe of Bethlehem, as we have shown, had both a human body and human soul, then it is absurd to suppose that a preëxistent, super-angelic spirit supplied the place of a human soul in the man Christ Jesus. Though many who call themselves Trinitarians maintain the doctrine of Christ's preëxistence, yet they suppose that Christ's preëxistent nature was personally united with the second person in the Trinity, and consequently maintain the true doctrine of Christ's divinity. But in this they are not so consistent as the Arians. For it is absurd to suppose that Christ had both a human soul

and a super-angelic soul, and that both these were personally united with the second person in the Trinity, and so constituted him a divine person. The true scriptural doctrine of Christ's divinity is founded upon the true scriptural doctrine of Christ's having a human body and a human soul, which was personally united with the second person in the Godhead. It is necessary, therefore, to believe the real humanity, in order to believe the real divinity of Christ. It has been found by observation and experience, that the denial of Christ's humanity directly leads to the denial of his divinity.

2. If Christ had a human body and a human soul, then we cannot account for the early depravity of children through the mere influence of bad examples, or bodily instincts and appetites. Those who deny original sin, or the native depravity of the human heart, endeavor to account for the well-known fact of the early and universal sinfulness of mankind, by ascribing it to bad examples, and to the bodily instincts and appetites of children and youth. They say, though no man is born a sinner, though no native depravity comes in consequence of Adam's apostacy, though the souls of children come into the world as pure and clean of moral impurity as a clean piece of paper, though they are naturally as much inclined to good as to evil, and are really as good as young moral agents can be; yet, through the weakness of their mental powers and faculties, through the force of their bodily instincts and appetites, and through the influence of bad examples, they are led into sin. This is the most plausible account that can be given of the early and universal sinfulness of mankind by Arminians, who deny original sin or native depravity. But this account of universal depravity is completely refuted by the state and character of the holy child, the holy youth, the holy man, Christ Jesus. He was an infant, but he did not sin in infancy. He had a frail, mortal body, but it did not corrupt his heart. He lived in a wicked world, where he saw many bad examples; but they did not lead him to follow them. He was a free moral agent, but he never chose to sin. He had a human soul and a human body, and was placed under the same circumstances that other children were. Why did he not disobey his parents, quarrel with his companions, speak wicked words, and profane the sabbath, like other children? He was hungry and thirsty. Why did not his appetites for food and drink lead him into intemperance? He suffered weariness and pain. Why did he not murmur at his unhappy situation? When he was reviled, why did he not revile again? If Christ had a human body and human soul, which was exactly like the human body and human soul of other children and other men, it is impossible

to account for his perfect innocency from his birth to his death upon Arminian principles, or to account for the universal depravity of other men and children upon the same principles. It is contrary to scripture and to the universal experience and observation of mankind, to suppose that infants come into the world as pure and innocent as the holy child Jesus.

3. If Christ was really man, then there is no natural impossibility of men's becoming perfectly holy in this life. It seems to be a very common opinion that there is not only a moral, but a natural impossibility of men's becoming perfectly holy while they remain this side of the grave. Many suppose that the present state of things, the influence of Satan, the weakness of the mind, and the infirmities and frailties of the body, are such, that men cannot cease from sinning till they lay aside these gross bodies, and leave this dark and sinful world. But this is an egregious mistake. Christ, under all these unfavorable circumstances, kept himself free from every moral evil. He was always pure, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, though clothed in a frail, mortal body, and surrounded by as many impediments to virtue as any other man ever was. And his perfectly holy life shows that mankind may live in the same manner in this present evil world. Christ knew that no man is under a *natural* necessity of sinning, and therefore he requires all his followers to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, and to keep themselves always in the love of God, which is *sinless* perfection. Neither the law nor the gospel allows any person to be imperfectly holy in this world.

4. If Christ was really man, then God is able to keep men from sinning consistently with their moral agency. Many suppose that God cannot restrain men from sinning without destroying their moral freedom and accountability. They think that if God should govern their hearts, or control their wills, he would destroy their moral liberty, and make them machines. But how does this appear? Christ was a man, and, like all other men, a free moral agent. Yet God held his hand, and directed all the motions and exercises of his heart, so as never to suffer him to have an evil thought, or to do a sinful action, in perfect consistency with his moral liberty and freedom. And if God could preserve Christ from sinning through all the changes, trials and sufferings he endured, we may justly conclude that he is able to restrain all other men from sinning, without obstructing or infringing upon their moral agency. Men are always perfectly free and voluntary in their thinking, speaking and acting, though the preparations of their heart and the answer of their tongues are from the Lord, and under his constant influence and control.

5. If Christ was really man, then there is no absurdity in the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints. This doctrine is often called absurd, and absolutely denied, notwithstanding all that the scripture says in favor of it, because it is supposed to be inconsistent with the free agency of christians. It is said that God cannot cause them to persevere in holiness, while he allows them to act freely and voluntarily. But why not? He allowed the man Christ Jesus to act freely and voluntarily through the whole course of his life, and yet caused him to be perfectly holy and harmless and uncontaminated by the world all the while he lived in it. It is said that while christians remain moral agents, they must be able to apostatize and fall away; and God cannot prevent it, consistently with their free agency. But was not Christ a free agent, and able to apostatize and neglect the great work which he had undertaken? He certainly was as able to neglect, as to perform his great work. But God held his hand and heart under his irresistible influence, which entirely prevented his negligence and apostacy, and caused him to persevere in holiness and obedience until he finished his work, without infringing upon or restraining his free agency. And cannot God as easily hold the hands and hearts of all christians under his irresistible influence, which shall infallibly prevent their apostacy, and cause them to endure to the end, so as to secure the salvation of their souls? The perseverance of the man Christ Jesus proves not only the possibility, but the certainty, of the final perseverance of saints, which is so plainly taught in the Bible.

6. If Christ was really man, then there is no reason to suppose that men possess a self determining power, or a power to act independently of the divine influence and control. Those who maintain this opinion, suppose that men could not be really in a state of probation in this life, if they were not possessed of a self determining power, and able to act independently of any divine influence or control over their free and voluntary actions. They say it is absurd to suppose that men can be in a state of probation while their actions are decreed, and are under the controlling influence of the Deity. But was not the man Christ Jesus in a state of probation? And were not all his actions decreed? And did he not always act under the superintending influence of his Father? We are told that God created all things "according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus." It was decreed from eternity that he should become incarnate; that he should be born in Bethlehem; that he should preach; that he should work miracles; that he should suffer and die to atone for the sins of the world; and, in a word, that he should do and suffer all that he did do and suffer till he ascended to heaven. And in executing his decrees respecting

Christ, God the Father guided every step he took, every word he said, and every action he did; and yet he was, strictly speaking, in a state of probation through the whole course of his life. Now if Christ could act freely, voluntarily and virtuously in a state of probation, without a self determining power, and under the constant and controlling influence of the Deity, then it is easy to see that mankind may be in a state of probation in this life, though all their actions are decreed, and are under a constant divine influence. If a self determining power be necessary to render mankind free, voluntary and accountable agents in this probationary state, then it is not easy to see why a self determining power is not as necessary to render them moral agents in a future state. They will all undoubtedly be free agents in a future state, and absolutely confirmed in holiness or sin. But how is it possible for God to confirm men in either sin or holiness, if they possess a self determining power? If saints and sinners in a future state should possess a self determining power, it is impossible for those who maintain the principle of self determining power to tell why saints in heaven may not become sinners, and sinners in hell become saints. The doctrine of a self determining power is not only unscriptural, but perfectly absurd.

7. If Christ was really man, then his conduct is a proper example for all men to follow. Accordingly the apostle Peter tells us that Christ left us an example that we should follow his steps. Though his human and divine nature were personally united, yet this personal union with the Deity did not render him, as some have supposed, impeccable, or incapable of sinning. If this had been the case, he would not have been in a state of probation. But notwithstanding his personal union with the Deity, he was really man, and as much in a state of probation as other men. His conduct through the whole of his probationary state, is a proper example to all mankind. His conduct as a child, is a proper example to all children. His conduct as a youth, is a proper example to all youths. And his conduct as a man, is a proper example to all men. As he walked, so all men ought to walk. As he was, in this world, so all men ought to be, while they live in it. The Socinians suppose that God's principal purpose in sending him into the world, was to set a perfect example of virtue and piety to mankind. But though this was not the principal purpose he came to answer, yet it was undoubtedly one purpose for which he came. His example is a criterion, by which all his followers may determine how far they walk worthy of their vocation and act up to their profession. And when they are in doubt how they ought to conduct in any situation or circumstance in life,

let them ask how they suppose Christ did act or would have acted in their present situation, and follow his real or supposed example.

8. If Christ was really man, then he is well qualified to perform all the remaining parts of his mediatorial office. In particular, to perform the part of an intercessor. So says the apostle expressly: "But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make *intercession* for them." It is because the second person in the Trinity is united to the man Christ Jesus, that it becomes him to intercede with the first person in the Godhead. It was in his mediatorial character, as God-man, that Christ interceded with the Father for his disciples and all his followers, as recorded by John. The union between the human and divine natures in the person of Christ, qualifies him for his delegated government of the world, from his resurrection to the end of time. He is to reign till the work of redemption shall be finished, and then to deliver up the kingdom to the Father. And the union between the humanity and divinity of Christ qualifies him, in a peculiar manner, for being the Supreme Judge of the world. He can make a visible appearance, and administer judgment in mercy.

9. If Christ be really a man, then they will be unspeakably happy, who shall be admitted into his visible presence, and dwell with him for ever. This blessedness he has promised to all his sincere followers. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And he prays in another place, "that they may behold my glory." Saints will probably be placed nearer the personal presence of Christ, than the angels, which will afford them a felicity superior to that of any of the heavenly hosts. Finally, if Christ was such a glorious and amiable man, then it must be the highest glory of men to become christians, and name his name, exhibit his moral image, and devote themselves to that glorious cause, for the promotion of which he suffered and died.